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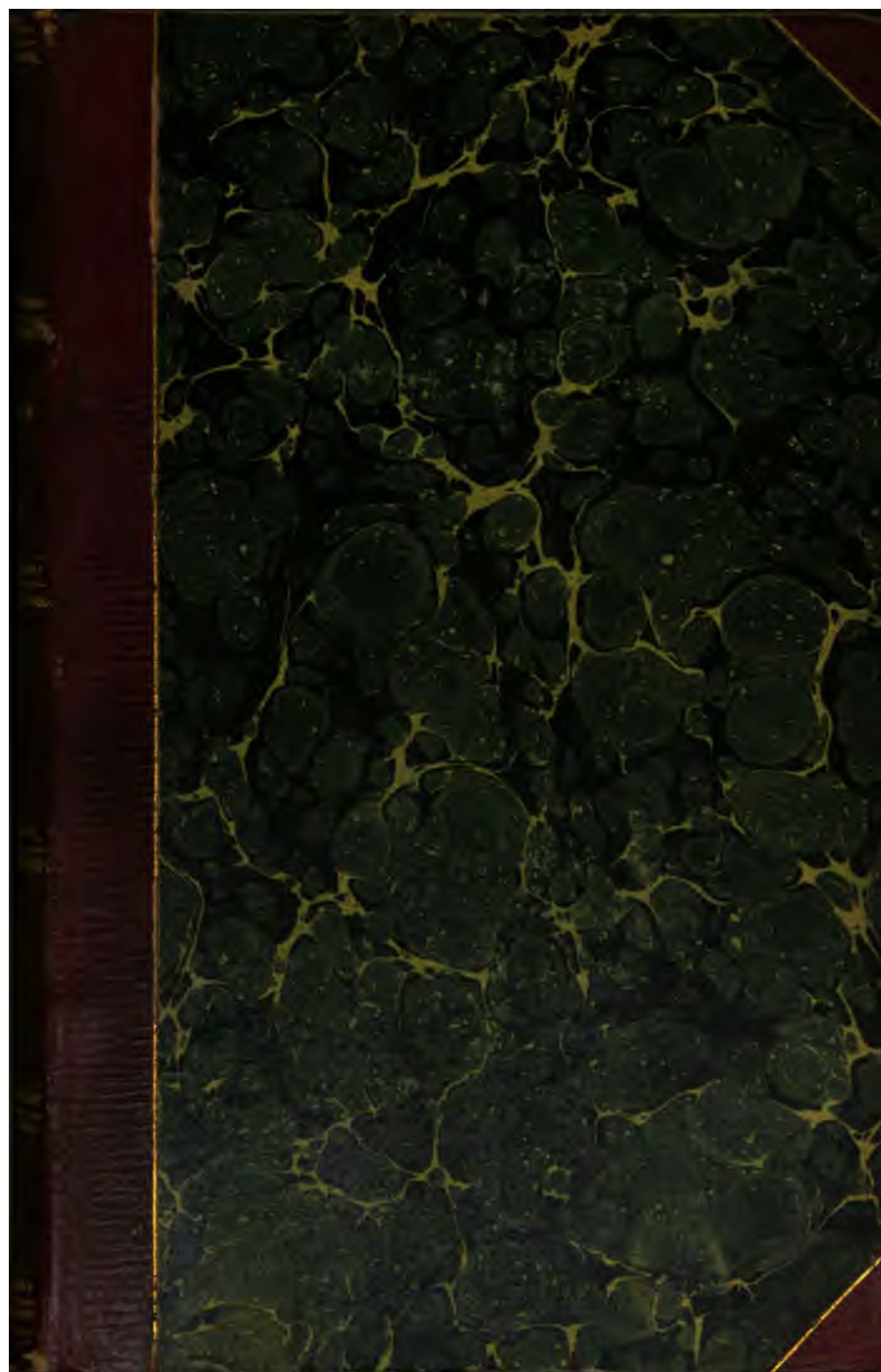
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[Mary Ann Kelly]



William, Duke of Bedford.

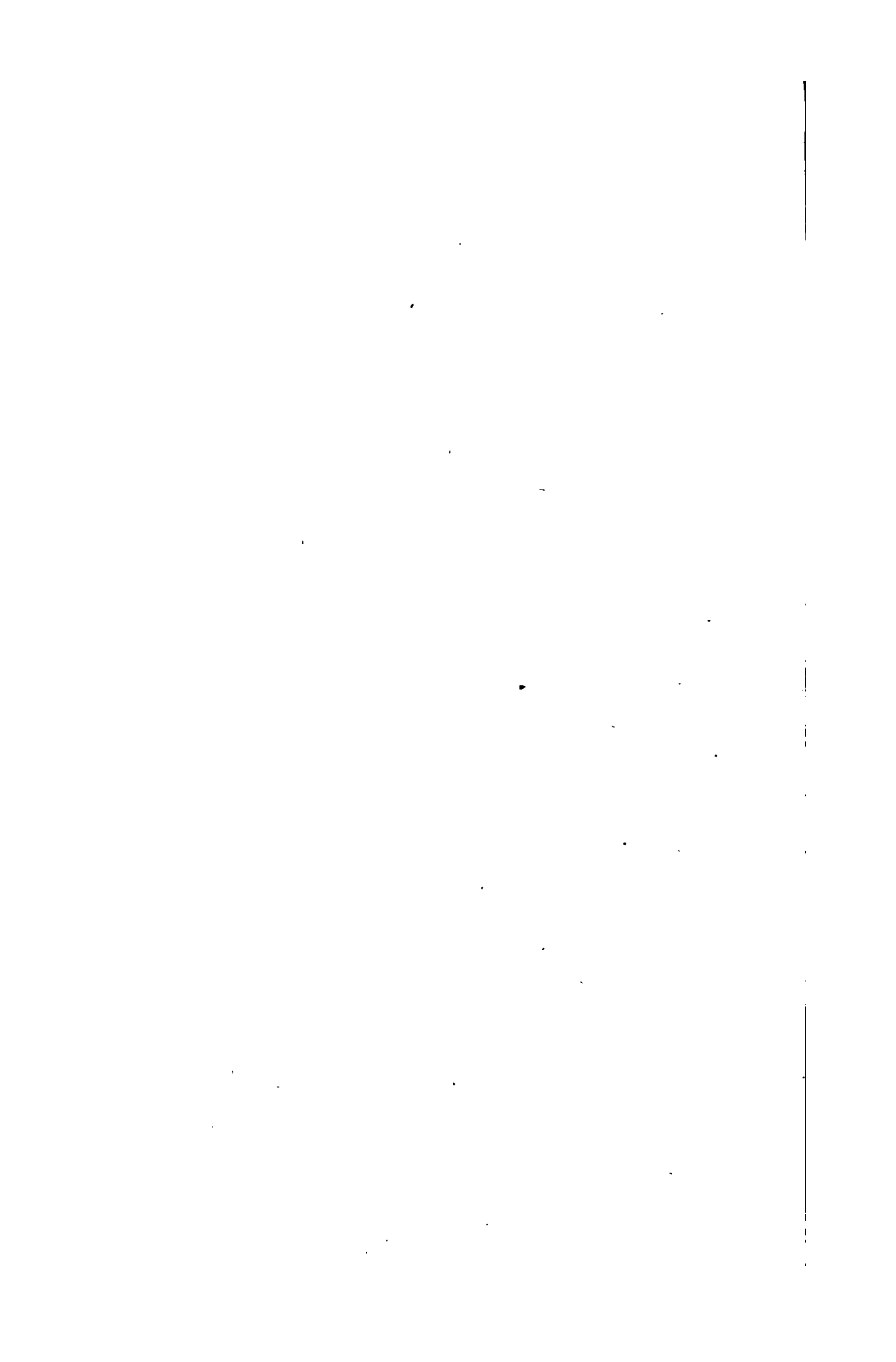
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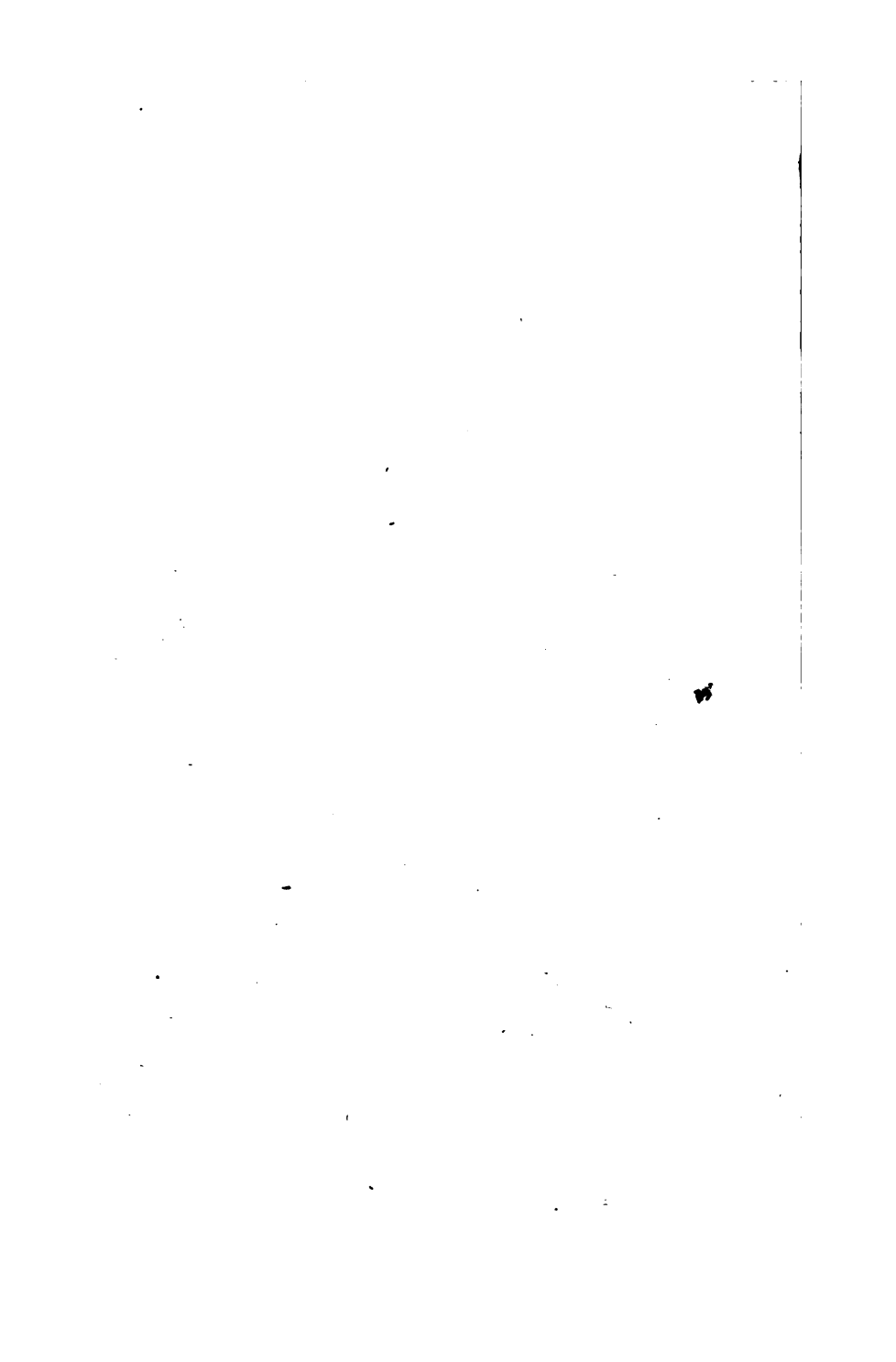


Bt from H. W. Edwards

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THE
FAVOURITE OF NATURE.

A TALE.

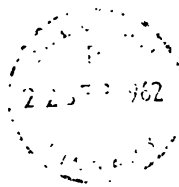
Que c'est un fatal présent du Ciel qu'une âme sensible !
ROUSSEAU.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

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1821.



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TO
MRS. JOANNA BAILLIE.

MADAM,

IN permitting me the honour of this address, you know not the full extent of the gratification you have afforded me.

But Mrs. Baillie, herself, is perhaps the only person who could not imagine the feelings with which any tribute must be tendered to the author of "Plays upon the Passions."

Whatever may be the fortune of my work, it will always be a most pleasing remembrance to me that it has given me occasion to offer a testimony, however humble, to talents I so much admire.

With every kind wish for your health and
happiness, in which it is not your friends and
relations that alone are interested,

Believe me,

M A D A M,

Your very obliged,

And obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

THE
FAVOURITE OF NATURE.

CHAP. I.

YOUNG, beautiful, and highly accomplished, few persons partook more largely of the gifts of nature and education than Eliza Rivers. To these commonly prized possessions she added, from fortune's favour, a competence for most of the comforts of life, and, in the opinion of the world, that is to say, that part of it which inhabited the village of Fairfield, and the neighbouring town of Belton, she must be, if it were not her own fault, the happiest being in existence.

There were, indeed, many moments of glowing enthusiasm when she felt a

capability of happiness ; but the permanent enjoyment of a composed mind, willing to believe that calm tranquillity is all the felicity that the frailty of human nature can firmly grasp, or steadily retain, she spurned with all the ardour and inexperience of nineteen.

She was an orphan ; both her parents died while she was yet an infant, and the care of her devolved to her only surviving relative, her grandmother by her father's side.

Mrs. Rivers was a religious and worthy woman ; but not exactly qualified to do justice to the superior abilities of her young charge. She placed her at a fashionable school near London, from whence she returned to her in her seventeenth year, with many brilliant and fashionable acquirements, and with an elegance and delicacy of taste in her pursuits, which a strong sentiment of disdain for affectation and false refinement had preserved in all its purity.

The darling of her aged relative, Eliza, had resided with her two years, doing what she pleased, uncontrolled and unadvised; for, added to the indolence of age, Mrs. Rivers was of a timid, retiring temper, unequal in every respect to oppose the impetuosity of Eliza's character with the firm and skilful management it required. Trite and homely observations upon the necessity of subduing our passions, and conquering our corrupt inclinations, were occasionally introduced; but the poor lady found them of such little use, that she only continued to propose them, to satisfy herself that, if Eliza did wrong, it was not for want of being told what was right.

But the time was approaching when Eliza was to be warned of her imperfections by a monitor, whose appeals are always solemn and affecting. It was by the side of a death-bed that, for the first time, she seriously reflected upon the manner in which nineteen years of her

life had flitted like a dream away, and left her without one remembrance that she could wish to retain, to cheer her in her own last hours. Mrs. Rivers, in her last illness, and speaking to her with a voice already broken and changed by the approach of death, seemed to her an awful being; and though her admonitions were few and simple, from the circumstances under which they were given, they pierced to the inmost soul of Eliza. Willing to repair, as far as she was able, her past faults, she gave herself wholly up to attendance upon her grandmother. Never was an invalid more tenderly nursed, more carefully watched. In the exuberance of repentant feeling, she would almost have yielded her own life to rescue from the grave a friend, of whose value and kindness she acknowledged, with tears of contrition, her impatient temper had too often rendered her insensible. Too often had the flip-pant reply followed the affectionate remonstrance; too often, in the vigour

and pride of youth, had the infirmities of age been unsupported and unfelt for. All this was past, and was irretrievable ; and Eliza could only lament over it, and pray that her grandmother's life might be spared, to enable her to render it happy. But the inevitable hour was at hand, and for the last time Mrs. Rivers called her to her bed-side.

With bended knees and her head bowed down upon the withered hand she pressed between her own, Eliza listened with solemn attention as her grandmother addressed her. Having mentioned the provision she had been enabled to make for her (amounting to about five thousand pounds) out of the savings of her income, the estate itself being entailed on the male heir, and having specified a wish that she should reside with Mr. Henley, the guardian she had nominated for her, Mrs. Rivers proceeded with the tenderest affection to speak of a subject of far greater moment.

"My anxieties respecting your temporal welfare are at peace," she said ; "But, my child—my dearest child—look at me *now*, and ask yourself, what are temporal anxieties ?"

She paused a moment to subdue her rising agitation ; but soon proceeded, with energy the most impressive—the most affecting :

"Oh, Eliza !" she exclaimed, "the last and dearest of my earthly cares ; give not your heart to the world. For a time it will smile upon, and flatter you, but it will cruelly deceive you ; it will overwhelm you with sorrow and disappointment. I fear—I tremble for you ; your youth, your beauty, your talents ;"—and for a moment she dwelt in silent and affecting contemplation of the interesting being she addressed. "Alas !" she continued, as if the short abstraction had but augmented her doubts—"alas ! with what seductive snares has Nature encompassed my darling child ! But of what avail—of what avail are these dangerous

gifts? What comfort have they for the last hours of life? Yet there is consolation, Eliza, for the bed of death; but it must be the labour of youth to acquire it. The sacrifice of vain desires, of frivolous imaginations, of impatient murmurs, the subjugation of passion, in short, the captivity of every thought to the will of God, as revealed to us in his Word—herein only is it comprized.” Again she paused, but Eliza essayed not to speak; her head still reclined upon the hand she held, which from time to time she pressed to her lips; but overwhelming sorrow constrained her to be silent.

Her grief, so profound, so touching, increased the natural pang which accompanied the idea of leaving in a state of comparative desolation one so lovely and so young. Tears fell fast down the aged cheeks of Mrs. Rivers, as her prophetic spirit presented to her this dear and cherished child—the pride of her old age—the last of her name and kindred—

too surely the victim of suffering and disappointment.

A fervent supplication broke from her lips, as piously she implored for her the protection of *Him* who alone is mighty to save.

“And Eliza,” she continued, “my dearest Eliza, pray fervently, continually, for strength from above ; it will be given you, doubt not : for true indeed it is, that God helps those who help themselves : and you must help yourself, my child ; you must be to yourself your best friend ; you must endeavour to turn to a noble use your noble powers ; you must dedicate them to their Bountiful Donor, directing them to that source from whence they sprung, and where only they can find their proper sphere of action.”

She ceased, and Eliza’s almost breaking heart testified the impression it had received. It was the last ! Death advanced, and words of monition or of tenderness were heard no more. Mrs. Rivers

speedily sunk into a state of lethargy and a few days terminated her existence.

The loss of this her near and only relative was the only real affliction that had ever befallen Eliza. In the first vehemence of her grief, she believed that she should never again find enjoyment in the various occupations and amusements of life. Of all human beings, Eliza Rivers was the least of a philosopher, though presenting in herself a curious specimen for the study of the speculative reasoner.

Absorbed, not touched by emotion, she could scarcely persuade herself that excitement, whether of joy or sorrow, must at length subside.

“The mind,”* as it has been observed, “in a shorter or longer time returns to its natural and usual state of tranquillity. In prosperity, after a certain time, it falls back to that state; in adversity, after a certain time, it rises up to it.”

* Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.

With this ignorance of human nature, Eliza was astonished to find how soon the remembrance of her departed relative became less and less painful, whilst every day, in restoring her to her wonted employments, insensibly drew her from the recollection of her loss, and renewed that craving after happiness which is the leading principle of existence; and must it be told, that nearly of as short a date as the tears which were plentifully shed to the memory of Mrs. Rivers were the pious resolutions to which her death gave rise? Not quite as transient were they; for more than a month they were uppermost in her mind, as much dwelt upon, as the vacillating nature of her temperament would admit of her dwelling upon any thing.

She was now the permanent guest of her guardian, Mr. Henley, who was the rector of Fairfield. He was a widower, with one daughter six years older than Eliza; he was a man of strict integrity,

and being of an age to unite with the authority of the guardian the affection of a parent, he was disposed by every effort in his power to supply to Eliza the want of friends and connections. Nor were his generous intentions solitary in her behalf; his daughter Louisa, a mild, reserved, but truly estimable young woman, though not hitherto upon more intimate terms with Eliza than their near neighbourhood produced, attracted to her by the interest which her extraordinary character inspired, sought to claim by the privileges of friendship, a right to influence a heart often mistaken, but, upon the whole, capable, as she believed, of all that could merit her esteem and love. But Eliza's chosen friend and confidante was a Miss Brooke, who, with her aunt, Lady Delville, resided at Fairfield. They had now been absent from home some months; and the intercourse between the young la-

dies was confined to very long, very frequent, and very confidential letters. One of Eliza's, addressed to Miss Brooke, about a month after her residence at the rectory, will serve to pourtray her feelings and sentiments upon her change of situation.

“ Your welcome letter, my dear Sophia, was a cordial that my heart really wanted, depressed as it was by the loss of my best and dearest friend, and by seeing myself thrown, probably for ever, into the society of those who are in comparison strangers. But I will not be unjust to the merits of Mr. Henley, or the kind-hearted Louisa ; they have been all, and more to me than I deserve. Still I must confess there is that calmness of manner about him, and that want of fervour in her, that I cannot pour out my soul to either of them, as I can to you. To give you an instance of that heart-chilling frigid in-

difference that is peculiar to Mr. Henley, I will relate to you what passed yesterday.

“ I told you, my dear Sophia, how deeply my heart was touched, as, in watching by the death-bed of my poor grandmother, I reflected upon the little value my existence had been to others, and what few sources of comfort I had prepared for myself to support me in my own dissolution.

“ When I found myself left, at nineteen years of age, chiefly to my own discretion, I felt it doubly incumbent on me to reform whatever was amiss in my conduct, and to endeavour to make my life as useful as it had hitherto been valueless and unimportant. I considered, that though my fortune was small, still it was large enough to enable me to do some good; and it occurred to me, that, having entirely done with masters, and consequently a good deal of time upon my hands, I might esta-

blish a school for the poor children in the village ; for which purpose I might build a small house for a schoolmistress, but I could undertake the chief superintendence of the concern myself. Do you see any thing in this, Sophia, extravagant or inconsistent ?

“ But to proceed.—I weighed it all in my mind ; and, having decided upon all my plans, it only remained to obtain Mr. Henley’s consent, who, as my guardian, was of course to be consulted. As to any hesitation on his side, I certainly never calculated upon its possibility. Judge, then, how much I was astonished, not to say offended, when, hearing me to the end of my speech, without making one comment, he stroked his chin, in his cool philosophical way, and with a quiet, but very provoking smile, said, ‘ I would rather advise against the building of a house.’

“ These words are nothing as they are repeated ; but the manner !—Oh ! Sophia,

it was all that you can conceive of civil contempt! The pleasure that I had taken in my plans was gone in a moment; therefore, without waiting to discuss the matter, I rose (perhaps too hastily), and merely saying that I would not give him any further trouble in the business, and that I should, certainly, as he did not approve of it, decline it altogether, I was about to leave the room; but he intercepted me, and taking my unwilling hand, he gently drew me back to my seat.

“ ‘ My dear Miss Rivers,’ said he, ‘ I honour the generosity of your motives in your present intentions, and you widely mistake me, if you suppose I could for a moment wish to counteract them. Without going to the full extent of what you propose,’——

“ Here I interrupted him, and begged him to say no more, as I had lost even the wish to complete my purposes. ‘ So soon have you lost the wish that, but a

few minutes since, you told me was the first of your heart ?' and again he looked at me with a penetrating, but very disagreeable smile. I was quite provoked, and turned from him in visible displeasure. Besides thwarting my views, I felt as if he treated me too much like a humoursome child.

" 'Nay, nay, Miss Rivers,' said he, 'I am sure you cannot be seriously displeased. I repeat to you again, that I admire and honour the many virtues of your heart ; I would only interpose my counsel to regulate, not to discourage them. I highly approve of your plan ; and I am far from opposing your giving up a part of your time and fortune to the prosecution of it. Louisa will, I am sure, be most happy to unite her efforts with your's ; and will be able to put you in the best method of making them successful, as she has for some time been endeavouring, in her humble way, to diffuse a little instruction amongst her poor neighbours.'

"A moment's reflection had convinced me of the folly as well as the impropriety of losing my temper on so trivial an occasion, I therefore replied, that I would seek Louisa and talk the matter over with her.

" 'I wish you would,' said he, and thus ended our conference: by which you will see as clearly as I do, that the enthusiasm which animates most of my undertakings makes no part of the character of my worthy guardian.

"I then went to Louisa; she was watering her plants in the garden. 'My dear Louisa,' said I, 'I want to talk with you.' 'With me?' and she looked surprised, as she well might; for, independently of my perfect conviction that we had not three ideas in common, I had hitherto found no spirits for conversation.

" 'Yes, with you,' I replied; 'I have been speaking to Mr. Henley about a plan I had formed for establishing a

charity-school, and he has referred me to you for information on the subject.'

" ' I shall be very happy, I am sure, to give you any.' She smiled, looked as if she was going to be animated, and evidently began to like me better than she had done. So I detailed my plans, leaving out my building scheme, which Mr. Henley's sarcasm had completely overturned.

" ' Suppose we sit down,' said Louisa ; and we placed ourselves upon the bench under the walnut-tree, and she proceeded thus : ' I have often been thinking—'

" But however, Sophia, as Louisa was somewhat prolix about the business, which certainly is a very unpardonable fault, particularly in a woman, I shall merely tell you that the sum and substance of what she had been thinking were, " that I had all the materials for being made in time into a very good and proper young lady ; that she thought it a pity I should ever do wrong ; and

hoped (with a fearful sort of emphasis) that my good intentions in the present instance were but the harbingers of my firm and continued efforts in the good cause of virtue and religion, &c. &c.

“ As she dilated all this into a very long harangue, and garnished it with a vast many—truisms, I dare say, but, however, a sort of truism which I have not been accustomed to hear, I felt a doubt that I was too tamely listening to a freedom of reprehension, not very consistent with my ideas of independence. But the kind creature was so very earnest, so unusually eloquent, and appeared so truly interested in the matter, that though, to be sure, I was dreadfully fatigued, and had more than once a misgiving that I had heedlessly laid out for myself a business that would give me the vapours, yet I comported myself *à merveille*, and after a dialogue—or I should rather say a discourse, for the dialogue on my side was carried on with true

primitive simplicity, an assenting yea, or a dissenting nay, being all the rhetoric I had any occasion for—we closed the conference with an agreement that I was to accompany her in the afternoon to see a little tribe of children that it seems she has been instructing, in her quiet way, for the last seven years.

Certainly I could not help feeling it as a tacit reproach upon what she probably thought my bustling overwhelming way of setting about the matter, when Louisa told me she had prosecuted the same plan as I proposed, for so long a time, and had kept it almost a secret from every body but her father. But I don't suppose she meant to reflect upon me; I hardly think she could. Well, accordingly in the evening we went in furtherance of our schemes: and here methinks you are going to exclaim, 'For heaven's sake, Eliza, spare me the recital; is the return you can make me for all the charming detail of *beaux*, and

balls, and *billets doux*, with which I have regaled you during my absence, nothing more than a meagre, dull narration of the lives and adventures of a parcel of charity children ?' In sad and sober truth, Sophia, these said charity children approach the nearest to an incident of any thing that has lately befallen me ; you will therefore be able to judge of the dearth of events that surrounds me.

“ But to end the story in as few words as possible, I was instructed in what was to be done. I am to share with Louisa in the tuition of her school, and to do what good in it I can ; and to hope very fervently, for my credit's sake, that I may long continue to feel my present propensity for instructing and improving the rising generation. Though, between ourselves, my original scheme being in a manner frustrated, I do not enter into the affair with that spirit and enthusiasm which would have encouraged me in the pursuit of an idea of my own. And

then the children ! when I came to see them, and sit with them an hour, and witness their astonishing stupidity!—little dirty, uninteresting things, it must be confessed. But if one *could* do them any good, you know, Sophia!—I should really be glad to do them any good. What a pity it is, I often think, that the right road through life should be so very uninviting. But I am afraid I shall get quite moralizing and stupid before you return, my dear ; therefore pray come back as soon as you can, and save me from the melancholy fate that threatens me. It is clear there is nothing to be done with Louisa—certainly she is every thing that is kind and worthy, and I wish her, from my heart, all manner of felicity ; but I doubt there is nothing to be done either with her, or for her. So truly grateful did I feel for her zeal for my improvement, and her steady interest in the *good cause of virtue*, &c. &c., that I had a fancy to know whether we could

participate in those charming illusions, those feasts of the imagination, with which a love of literature and the arts has often blessed me.

“ Like a miser, I had secreted my treasured hoard, not venturing even to breathe, in Louisa’s apartment, the names of Byron, Scott, and Campbell, where I saw nothing but ‘ Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor,’ and other valuable and straight-forward matter of the same nature. Mr. Henley has a library, and is a man of sense, and taste, and information, and takes in the Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews, and knows, I believe, generally speaking, what is going on in the world. But, till yesterday, I have never heard Louisa talk of any thing but which was the best way of cutting out linen ; and how many frocks and petticoats might be made of so many yards of stuff.”

“ When I found that she really could be animated and impressive, and (Heaven forgive me if I say) upon so very stupid a theme, I felt, as I said before, a fancy to know whether one could kindle in her a spark of enthusiasm after one’s own heart—any sentiment that could draw one to her with a little fervour, and make one talk to her, and be pleased with her, and love her.

“ A beautiful, glowing, poetic sunset, as we were returning home yesterday evening, attracted my admiration, which I expressed in a quotation from somebody or other, I forget whom ; ‘ Yes, the sun sets very red ;’ she observed, ‘ we shall have a fine day again to-morrow.’

“ I ended my quotation, and said nothing more about the sun. Though I had abundant reason, you will allow, I did not yet quite despair of her ; and as we were sitting in a vacant sort of way

after tea, Mr. Henley having dined out, I hazarded the inquiry, 'if she were fond of reading?'

" ' I have not time to indulge my inclinations on that head; and it is so general an error for people to fancy themselves fond of reading, who certainly are not so, that I am afraid of taking a merit to myself that I do not deserve if I say that I am. But this I know, that it is a very great recreation and delight to me, when I have half an hour to spare for my father's study.'

" The answer was modest and sensible, at all events. Far better admit the doubt, deplorable as it is, that one may be dead to that exquisite, that ethereal gratification, which springs from a love of literature, than do as our poor friend Miss Bartley does. She, you know, has discovered that, in the present order of things, and the common run of society, young ladies, as well as young gentlemen, must appear to have more

than one idea in their heads ; and that, to pass through the world, they must necessarily shew a certain degree of acquaintance with the floating literature of the day, to purchase them those tributes of admiration which their worthy grandmothers earned by raising pie-crust and working tent-stitch. Finding all this to be the case (not indeed by her own original intelligence, which must be pronounced guiltless of teaching her any thing, but by the happier sagacity of her lady mother), how has she laboured to get into the right way ! What albums have been submitted to me for wonder and applause !—and to you too, Sophia ! Have you not often been regaled in this way, and solicited to paint or to write something in them ? for they must be filled. And filled with what ? With conundrums and riddles, and lines to dear friends on their birth-days ; sonnets to roses, lilies, violets, new-born babes, tears, smiles, and the usual lively and

naval topics which light the fire of genius in poetic young ladies.

"Lord help us! we are poor creatures at the best. Miss Bartley was intended by nature to look straight before her, and work flounces and knit purses to the end of her life. But she turns her head another way to see where the multitude are going, and not minding where she is going herself, no wonder she runs against posts and pillars. And I must presume to find fault with her! who have just knocked my simple head against a plan, wherein I begin to feel a mortal misgiving that I shall never shine. Am I likely to cover myself with glory, Sophia, at the head of a village school? Are patience and perseverance my distinguishing characteristics?

"But what a digression! where upon earth am I got to? I was going to say something about Louisa and her taste for reading. Oh!—I was telling you that

she modestly disclaimed any exorbitant appetite for intellectual food.

“ ‘ Are you fond of poetry?’

“ ‘ Not merely of poetry, because it is called such. I rather think I am not fond of it; for I have met with very little, except in the standard works of our British classics, that gave me any very exquisite pleasure in the perusal.’

“ Better and better! I began to have hopes of her.

“ To find any one fastidious is a relief to the monotonous exclamations of ‘ charming!’ ‘ lovely!’ ‘ divine!’ which are always heard in society, as well as the more chaste and elegant applause of the well-judging few; to prove, perhaps, to the possessors of genius, that they must undergo the misfortune of being commented upon, and applauded by those to whom they might be tempted to make the reply of Dr. Johnson: ‘ Bless me, have I said any thing that you can understand?’

“ After a short catechism, by which I found she had read Lord Byron with all proper homage, very much approved of Walter Scott, and in fact knew the names of every body worth knowing, it appeared that she had never yet read Campbell’s ‘Gertrude of Wyoming.’ Never read it ! Next to the exquisite pleasure of reading it for the first time myself, I could conceive nothing more gratifying than going over it again with another to whom it was new ; provided, indeed, that other possessed the happy capability of entering with complete sympathy into all the nameless, indescribable thrills—(I want a word)—that seem to shake us into actual perceptible feeling of the poet’s power.

“ Might I venture it ? might I venture the introduction of one of the most venerated of my cherished authors to the chance of not being relished and properly understood ? But such could not be the case. So natural, so touching are

the charms of this beautiful poem, that it suffices *but* to have a heart, to luxuriate in all the pensive delight it is calculated to excite.

" I hurried up stairs—I brought it down.

" ' Would she read it now, or when?'

" ' Perhaps you will be so very kind as to read it to me?'

" ' With the greatest pleasure.'

" The candles are ordered; the shutters closed; and, but for the odious work-basket, which, however, I found was indispensable, we sat down to it with every omen of success.

" As I proceeded in the perusal, I stole every now and then a glance, to catch, if possible, the impression of her mind. Nothing beyond a tranquil smile of approbation. It did not meet the ardour of my feelings. Oh, Sophia! what is this strange, this unaccountable something that we call by the name of sympathy? What mysterious connection can there be between mind and mind?

and how is it that in a moment we receive distinct and clear impressions, which no language shall enable us to express intelligibly ?

“ I proceeded with somewhat of a descending temperature of sensation, lowering more and more, under the frequent interruptions of dropping her scissors, rummaging for something in the work-basket, thinking about a hundred and fifty times she heard her father coming, and making me pause to know if I did not think so too ; wondering whether the water was boiling for his tea, &c. &c. All this was intermingled with those same smiles of approbation ; but the phantom of a paroxysm, or a transport, or an energetic remark—nothing of the kind, my dear Sophia ; and so, losing all hope and pleasure, and reading on in a languid lackadaisical sort of manner, I was not at all sorry when she put the finishing stroke to my undertaking, by getting up hastily from her chair, and begging

my pardon, ' but she recollected a parcel that must be made up for the Belton carrier; she would not be five minutes,' &c. &c.

" As for proceeding to read Gertrude of Wyoming to any one who could be drawn from it by remembrances of the Belton carrier, why, you know, it was a thing morally and physically impossible; so, when she returned, I excused myself by saying, with as much truth as ever I said any thing in my life, ' that I was tired, and could not read any more.'

" Dear! I am sorry you are so soon tired; but I would not trespass upon you too much.'

" And there was an end of it;—' and I think there may as well be an end of your letter,' perhaps you will say: ' Heavens, what a packet!' It is well for you that Mr. A. is coming to Belton this very day, and perchance will frank it, or you will be reduced to the woeful

alternative of losing half my valuable lucubrations, or paying, upon a reasonable computation, five times the value of them.

“ Pray come back, Sophia, for I want you most amazingly ; particularly now this new man, this Sir George, is coming. He inherits, you know, poor grand-mama’s estate at Fairfield. Nobody knows any thing about him, but that he is just come from the Continent—has five thousand a year—and keeps seven hunters ; by which last article of intelligence we may reasonably infer, that if he had been good for any thing he would have broken his neck long since.

“ Adieu, my dear !

“ Always your sincere and affectionate

“ ELIZA.”

Having allowed Eliza to give so ample a description of her sentiments for Louisa, it is but fair to afford that young lady an opportunity of returning the compliment. But as Louisa was un-

fortunately destitute of any dear invaluable confidante, who had time and patience enough for the perusal of an epistle of four sheets, we must be content to make an extract from a letter she dispatched about this time to a very worthy and sensible old aunt, whom, next to her father, she loved almost as well as any body in the world.

“ You ask me to give you a description of Miss Rivers, both in person and mind. The first part of your request is easily answered. I imagine there can be but one opinion; that she is really a beautiful girl. She is very tall; and, but that she has something almost majestic in her air and manner, which totally banishes the most remote idea of awkwardness, she might be thought too tall. Her features are regular and good; her eyes the most eloquent I ever saw; her complexion is perfectly transparent; and as she curls her glossy dark hair in ringlets round her neck, the contrast

between its raven hue, and the ivory whiteness on which it reposes, gives a softness and delicacy to her appearance, truly lovely and feminine. Upon the whole, I consider Eliza Rivers, when disposed to please, all that can be conceived of attractive and engaging. What shall I say of her at those unhappy moments, when she feels, and cannot, *conquer or subdue*, the restlessness inseparable from ardent feelings, and from a mind of hurrying, overwhelming force? I can but sigh over the imperfection of all earthly good. I imagine what she might have been under the tuition of those dear parents, one of whom I have lost. In my short-sighted wisdom, I fancy she might have been an honour and an ornament to human nature; and when I observe those bursts of impatience, the restless indications of an ill-regulated mind, I say with Ophelia,---

"Oh what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!"

" But reflection tells me, all is right —all is as it should be. Eliza, in other hands, would doubtless have been a far different creature. But she is to fulfil the wise purposes of her Creator. I may mourn over the misapplication of her great talents, and tremble for the consequences of her mistaken estimate of happiness. But ' He alone who knows whereof we are made, knows alone for what end.' Perhaps her very imperfections may be sanctified to her. She may live to *feel*, not to *learn*, the value of those principles of *religion*, which ruinous indulgence and the nature of her education have never given her an opportunity of understanding and cherishing, as the only guide, and strength, and support of frail humanity."

If this latter part of Louisa's description be somewhat vague and indistinct, it must be remembered that as she was, in every sense of the word, a Christian, it was one of her most inflexible rules to

govern herself by the precepts of that charity which "thinketh no evil."—Hence, though she clearly discerned, and could as clearly have specified, the striking faults of Eliza, she rather chose to palliate by tracing them to the source of a fashionable, but erroneous education. Truth compelled her to advert to them, but having done so, she proceeded with infinite satisfaction to contrast them with many virtues.

She related to her aunt the little circumstance respecting the charity-school.

"Nothing," she observed, "could be more winning, more fascinating, than her manner amongst these poor children. When I saw her attentively endeavouring to learn their names, and promising to several of them who were not so well clad as the rest, a frock, a hat, or a pair of shoes (a promise which she has strictly performed), I could not but admire the superiority of virtue.

I had seen Miss Rivers at all times in our humble circles the object of marked attention, from the force of beauty united to uncommon talents and accomplishments, extracting applause even from those whose envy struggled vehemently against the enthusiasm she inspired: her repartee, and wit, and gaiety, embellishing her with dangerous, dazzling charms. I have seen her captivating—I have seen her brilliant; but her triumphs were those in which the heart and affections of her captives had little concern. It was a brilliancy of talent, which, alas! like every thing belonging to Eliza, totally undisciplined, much oftener made one shrink from the terror of being wounded by it, than ready to sympathize with it as the gaiety of a young and innocent heart. It was in the moment of triumphant virtue that I saw her most lovely, most endearing. It might be in the drawing-room, in the

display of her various endowments, when she was enchanting my ear with her sweet and highly cultivated voice, or seducing my fancy with her arch and playful sprightliness, that I *admired* her; but it was here amongst these poor little children, speaking to them with kindness and gentleness, and trying to alleviate their wants and interesting herself in their welfare, that I saw her as a being destined to immortality, and felt for her an affection as fervent as my heart is capable of sustaining."

After having briefly touched upon the want of cordiality in their general intercourse, she concluded thus:—

"Perhaps the fault is wholly mine; I know that I am reserved in my habits, and certainly by nature calm, or what Eliza would call cold, in my feelings; but I think I could be warm in my regard for her, if she would but let me love her, and have patience with my want of energy, and suppose it possible that I

may have some good qualities, though I am deficient in a taste for her particular pleasures. She argues, perhaps, from my silence, that I do not participate in the rapture she finds in her music; and her other elegant pursuits. She does not see me wipe away the tears of pious pleasure, which her matchless performance of Handel's sacred songs never fails to draw from my eyes. She does not hear the sigh that swells my bosom, in hearing truths divine breathed forth in such a voice of touching melody, adorned by native taste, and by all that science can bestow, wanting only those associations of religious feeling, which, to minds of devotion, make the very name of Handel dear and venerated. In short, dear aunt, I cannot but feel that Eliza is altogether unjust to me. But in the fervent hope that she never may want the affection I could entertain for her, I cannot make the painful effort of conquering an undefinable, but very strong

sensation, that makes me always, in some degree, afraid of her ; and gives me an idea that, judging her by what she is, not by what she might be, it is prudent and advisable to keep on the side of good wishes for her, rather than the intimacy of friendship."

CHAP. II.

A VERY few words will suffice to characterize Sir George Melmoth.

He was a young baronet of six and twenty, with very little pride, and a great deal of good nature. Indeed, his want of pride had sometimes been a trouble to him ; for, as the fortune and title his father transmitted to him had both been gained, the one in a thriving manufacturing concern, the other as a reward for some bright improvement he had the good fortune to strike out in it, he considered it incumbent on him to do all that lay in his power to wipe away the blot which his patent of nobility had received, by coming too closely in contact with that other patent for manufacturing cot-

ten, which his good father had also been honoured with.

He was now come to make his first appearance at Fairfield, to discover what sort of a sporting country it might be; who kept hounds, who gave good dinners, who went to Newmarket, and other inquiries similar in importance.

The arrival of any one in a country village is a great event; but the arrival of such a personage as Sir George Melmoth! a baronet, a young man, and a single man, formed a sort of epoch to the young ladies, who had long been going the same dull round of the Belton beach, variegated only with an occasional curate, to officiate for Mr. Henley when he was laid up with the gout.

The four Miss Bartleys, and the three Miss Johnsons, and Miss Maria Sidney, seemed to borrow new life and new charms, and certainly bought new gowns upon the happy prospect. Eliza Rivers, though she would not have condescended

to cross a street for the express purpose of seeing this stranger, was content to take her share in the sensation he excited. It was for Louisa Henley alone to go on in the same quiet way, and not to know till three days after her father had called upon the baronet that he intended doing it at all : and this intelligence it is possible she might have escaped, if Mr. Henley had not, one morning when they were sitting at breakfast, made an inquiry of " what day in the next week shall I make a dinner party for Sir George Louisa ? " " I did not know that you had called upon him, Sir. " " Of course, my dear, I could not avoid it, even if I had been inclined. He will probably return my visit to-day or to-morrow, and I should wish then to fix a day with him. "

" Is Sir George a pleasant, proper sort of person, Sir ? " enquired Eliza.

" Let me see : a pleasant, proper sort of person ! why, as clearly as I can understand the proposition—"

" I will state it more intelligibly : is he gentlemanlike, and conversable, and clever, and well informed, and handsome, and—"

" Allow me to make my reponses as you go along," said Mr. Henley, laughing, " as the catalogue of queries promises to be a long one."

" But in one word, Sir, is he a perfect gentleman ; and is there no unhappy possibility of his bringing one to the luckless remembrance of those abominable cotton-mills ?"

" He appeared to me good-humoured and gentlemanly ; and, as far as I was personally concerned, I was so fortunate as to escape all "*luckless remembrances*" of the kind you allude to."

" Upon the whole, then, you think he may be tolerated ?"

" I conceive it to be possible."

" Do you think you shall like him, Louisa ?"

"I cannot tell."

"I wish you could guess."

"Why?" and Louisa smiled.

"Because it is absolutely indispensable, you know, that he should inspire either you or me with a hopeless passion; and in case you had any inclination for a little sentiment, just by way of amusement during the summer months—"

"I beg to resign any chance of that kind in your favour; I am not at all ambitious of being amused with a hopeless passion."

"But though it may be quite indispensable that one of you should imbibe a passion for Sir George, and I am willing to take it for granted that it is," said Mr. Henley, bending with mock gravity to Eliza, "yet (pardon my ignorance in these matters) I am not equally aware of the necessity for its being of a hopeless nature."

"Not necessary that it should be hope-

less! Where would be the interest of the business if, as the poet says,

"A mutual flame was quickly caught,
As quickly too revealed,"

and then he and I (were I the fortunate nymph), after having sauntered amongst the shades of Fairfield, arm in arm, for two or three months, and been seated together at all the dinner tables in the neighbourhood, and exchanged some half dozen tender epistles, should go to church in a matter-of-fact sort of way, as in the fairy tales, concluding with, "*so this Prince and Princess married, and lived very happy ever afterwards.*;" certainly, Sir, you must allow that would be very uninteresting!"

"I stand corrected," replied Mr. Henley, with assumed humility, "and can only wonder that so very hum-drum a manner of conducting these affairs has not long since been exploded. It must be infinitely more animating to protract the season of doubts and anxieties. But

if, in the perversity with which circumstances will sometimes occur, no fortunate obstacles should arise, no delightful wretchedness, no charming perplexities, I am at a loss to imagine how you would proceed in such a dilemma."

"With the greatest ease in the world."

"May I be enlightened as to your method?"

"Supposing, for instance, that Sir George falls desperately in love with me." Both Mr. Henley and Louisa exchanged smiles, that seemed to say, nothing would be more probable if Sir George had a heart to lose.

"Then, in that case," proceeded Eliza, it is incumbent upon me to have a rooted aversion to him."

"Indeed! I was not aware of that," drily observed Mr. Henley.

"Oh! absolutely necessary, Sir, to the spirit and variety of the plot. Louisa, you must know this as well as I?"

"I must, as my father did, beseech you to pardon my ignorance; but I am happy to be instructed, so pray go on."

"If, on the contrary, Sir George should treat me with coldness or reserve, or pride, or, in short, give me decided conviction that he is perfectly indifferent about me, I am to fall desperately in love with him."

"Then I am to infer," said Mr. Henley, "that it is an axiom in love, that the passion be felt only on one side?"

"Exactly so."

"That being the case, I do not immediately perceive what possible chance exists of its ever being prosperous; unless indeed, as extremes are said to meet, the party who marries upon rooted aversion may be considered as nearly upon a par, in point of feeling, with the party who is lucky enough to be furnished with an hopeless passion."

“ Why, it would be very interesting to marry upon rooted aversion ; it would afford an opportunity of exciting a profusion of sympathy, and of dissolving in tears, and sighing, and being sentimental to the end of one’s life. But the usual way, for *effect*, is, that the party loving and the party abhorring are each to descend by degrees, and meet one another half way ; and then the compassion on one side, and the tenderness on the other, and the vanity of being of consequence, and the pleasure of being beloved, and the moral certainty of its being all the same at the end of a twelve-month ! ” —

: “ All this,” said Mr. Henley, nodding sagaciously, “ brings matters about with very pretty incident, and a good deal of striking emotion ; vastly preferable to the dull common-place way which ninety-nine people out of a hundred are stupid enough to prefer.”

“ Yes ; and it really is very stupid, when you consider that it is the last chance a poor woman has for any thing like incident or emotion ; for when she is married, you know—”

“ Oh ! then, to be sure,” said Mr. Henley, “ she is a lost creature, to all intents and purposes.”

Louisa Henley, who, through all this *badinage*, fancied she perceived a latitude of sentiment which prevented her from finding any very great amusement in the sprightly dialogue Eliza was carrying on with her father, now interrupted them by calling Mr. Henley’s attention to the important subject of who was to be invited to meet Sir George.

As this was a point on which Eliza felt very little interest, she left them to the discussion of it, when, after some debate, it was settled that Mr. Bartley, who was a banker in the adjoining town of Belton, his family, Sir George and themselves, would make up as large a party as Mr.

Henley had any pleasure in seeing at his table ; for, being somewhat precise in his habits, he had imbibed a great prejudice against hurry and confusion in any of his undertakings ; and, in strange and unfashionable opposition to the prevailing taste, had an insurmountable dislike to crowded rooms and magnificent entertainments.

Sir George did not call on the morning he was expected, but late in the following day, when, Mr. Henley not being in the dining-room when he was ushered in, and Louisa having walked into the village, Eliza had the fortunate chance of receiving him alone.

This, indeed, was a piece of luck she would rather have declined ; for though, from her general sprightly and unembarrassed manner, a stranger would have supposed her the last person in the world to be discomposed at finding herself placed in the pleasant predicament of having to entertain, or (in a short phrase)

play the agreeable to those to whom she was entirely unknown, yet she possessed, in reality, no very trifling share of that *shrinking* sort of sensation, which has its origin, sometimes in modesty or humility, but very often in pride.

In highly gifted minds, not humbled by those divine precepts which, shewing the worthlessness of all mere worldly advantages, produce docility and gentleness of heart, there is commonly a sense of superiority that claims respect and attention. As this is a claim in which few persons are so insignificant as not to fancy themselves entitled, in some degree, to make a share, it often happens that, in the general clamour, the most meritorious competitor for distinction passes unnoticed; and it is this possibility of not being properly appreciated that generates a sentiment of disdain and reserve, which always produces awkwardness, and is sometimes mistaken for diffidence. And this sentiment it was that made

Eliza, almost immediately on the entrance of Sir George, gather up her working materials, and saying "that she would seek Mr. Henley," prepare to leave the room.

But Sir George, with a smile of extreme good humour, and with perfect politeness, begged the favour of her to stay a few minutes.

A little surprised at the oddness of the request, she resumed her seat, and he proceeded thus:—

"I cannot be mistaken; I have the honour of addressing Miss Rivers?"

Eliza bowed a reply.

He hesitated a little, as if doubtful in what language to express what he wished to say. At last, "I am fearful of giving you pain, by reverting to the circumstance that occasioned me to visit Fairfield; but I should be unjust to my own feelings if I did not take the earliest opportunity of requesting you will, as far as may be agreeable to you, at all

times consider yourself as entitled to command—to—to—" He paused ; and Eliza, not exactly catching his meaning, looked at him with a degree of surprise, that seemed to call for further explanation.

" But, indeed, Miss Rivers," he continued, in great confusion, " I am, as you see, a very stupid fellow in making fine speeches ; I only meant to say that if ever you feel the inclination to ramble over the shades of the Hall, or would honour the gardener and me so much as to desire him to send you the earliest and best of his flowers and fruit"—

Eliza, pitying his embarrassment, and pleased with the good nature and evident kindness of his motives, here interrupted him, with expressing her sense of his kindness ; and just at that instant Mr. Henley entering the room, the conversation turned upon more general topics.

Mr. Henley had so much unaffected simplicity of manner, that Sir George,

though occasionally disposed to talk of his sporting friends, the Duke of A——, and Marquis B——, and Lord C——, and the possibility of their coming down to cheer his solitude, and to illuminate the natives of Fairfield with the rays of their illustrious countenances, found it the easiest way of succeeding with him to be unostentatious. He was, therefore, upon the whole, anxious to please and to be pleased.

Louisa Henley returned from her walk just as he was about to depart; and his visit, though it had been protracted beyond the usual period of a formal morning call, could not, of course, be immediately concluded. When he did go, he expressed a very warm wish to Mr. Henley that “they should be good neighbours whenever he was in the country.” He accepted his invitation for the next week with the greatest pleasure; hoped he should have the pleasure of seeing him and his ladies at

the Hall before he left Fairfield, where he proposed staying about a fortnight; and, after other civil speeches to the same purport, he took his leave.

CHAP. III.

Of Sir George nothing more was seen or heard, till the day on which he was expected to dinner.

Of the rest of the party invited it may be necessary to say a few words.

Mr. Bartley was a man of independent fortune, acquired like the independent fortunes of most of the gentry resident in provincial towns, either by the trading efforts of themselves or their immediate predecessors. He was now, however, decidedly the first person in Belton ; oftentimes serving the office of mayor, and always being a portly alderman. Few words may suffice to give a sketch of this worthy personage. At this

period he had passed his seventieth year. As he did not marry till he was considerably turned of forty, he had the pleasant satisfaction of seeing himself in his old days surrounded with a family of young people, who, like the rest of their species, wanted to be merry when he wished to be grave; to make a noise when he liked to be quiet; to fill his house with company when he would have preferred going to bed; and dragged him to parties, and made him a beau in his dress, when he would have been more comfortable by his own fire-side, in a flannel gown and night-cap.

But as he was a very good-humoured man, and of all things liked talking, or what is commonly called a *prose*, he endured his disquietudes with great composure; at all times satisfied if he could catch hold of any charitably disposed Christian, who would endure the martyrdom of being held by the button of his coat, whilst he recounted, and animad-

verted upon, the contents of the newspaper.

Mrs. Bartley was altogether a different sort of person. She was not to be made happy by talking, or by silence, or by any thing short of being, upon all occasions, of the greatest possible consequence to every body about her. If she could have made choice of any particular endowment for this purpose, she would have preferred the gift of beauty ; both because it occasioned the least trouble, and also that, in her young days, it was considered jointly with money, as the only possible recommendation a woman could possess. But she was, unluckily, extremely plain in her person, and had no more money than she wanted for her own use : hence she anticipated the forlorn prospect of passing her days in solitude and single blessedness, unless she had the good fortune to strike out for herself some kind of attraction. Neither beauty nor wealth being

propitious, there yet remained a chance—she might be a *bel esprit*.

She was deficient, sure enough, in taste and talent, and wit and judgment, but she was not aware of these deficiencies; and, mistaking a shrewd sort of cunning for profound discernment, a great share of envy for a noble emulation, and a pert flippancy of remark for a spirit of brilliant wit, she fancied that she really was a very superior person.

After having literally scared half the country with her ill-natured sarcasms, and gained the reputation of being vastly clever, but vastly satirical, fate decided that she should pass a summer in the society of Mr. Bartley, at the house of a mutual relation.

It has often been remarked that the little god of love is a very perverse deity, and, in driving people to their destiny, commonly makes it, either first or last, very different from what they had expected; and this was the case with poor

Mr. Bartley. Forty years had he lived ungoverned, uncontradicted, contented and happy. A bachelor he was, and a bachelor he would have continued, with all the pleasure in the world, had not the little god—but no, the little god had nothing to do with it; it was all Miss Hobson's doing, and nobody's else. She dropt insinuations of tenderness which approached very nearly to assurances, before they penetrated the guileless unsuspecting heart of Mr. Bartley; and by dint of talking to him, and at him, and representing in lively colours the “forlorn estate of a poor old man in his last days, without either chick or child to care for him, a prey to some greedy, rapacious housekeeper, or some wild, worthless, thankless, graceless nephew, who would very likely dance upon his grave the night he was buried,” she worked upon his feelings to such an excess, that, partly believing her statement, and supposing that the surest

means of allaying her apprehensions on his account was to marry, and to marry *her*—he brought himself to propose the fatal question. He had not long to wait for an answer ; indeed that had been prepared some weeks before he had any idea of calling for it at all. The offspring of this illustrious pair consisted of four daughters and a son. The young gentleman was at this time twenty-one, and the elder of the young ladies twenty years of age ; or, in her mother's reading, eighteen. This little error in calculation was never corrected ; for, as Mrs. Bartley had three more damsels to dispose of, she wisely considered that it would better facilitate their prospects to bring them out one at a time ; and, like a good financier, always to keep a stock in hand of an odd year or two, which plan would be sure to turn to account if they came to the doubtful era of five and twenty without any establishment, either in possession or reversion.

Though the three younger ladies (the youngest turned of sixteen) would very often steal out to take a walk without her protection ; and with the assistance of an occasional present slyly made by "*pa*," dress much smarter than was at all agreeable to "*ma* ;" yet upon the whole she manœuvred vastly well ; and as nobody cared any thing about their age, her complaints of the difficulty of "knowing what to do with girls who were too tall and womanly for the nursery, and much too young to be introduced into company," were generally commiserated with great politeness and heard with due indifference.

The son was a little gentleman in his person, but not of the less consequence on that account. In the eyes of his family he was considered as a sort of phenomenon; and having had the advantage of a three years' run at one of the Universities, he was now returned home with the usual stock of intelligence which

is generally brought away from those "seminaries of sound learning and religious improvement." In the interim of waiting for a living, which his father intended purchasing for him, he passed his time in making puns and making love ; astonishing the ladies with the quickness and diversity of his wit, and provoking the gentlemen with the matchless extent of his impudence. And, but that he was really very good-natured, it being the fortunate fate of Mrs. Bartley's children to inherit that golden gift from their father, it is possible that his jests, however divested, as they certainly were, of all malice, and springing merely from the necessity he felt of pushing himself into notice, would not always have been fortunate enough to pass off with mere contempt.

For the character of the daughter but few words will be necessary. "Harriet is eighteen," Mrs. Bartley would frequently observe ; "it is high time, therefore, to pat her on the back," she would

say, " and give her a shove, and send her into the world, to see whether she finds any one much more shining than herself. But that diffidence, that silly want of dependence on herself, will, I fear, be her stumbling-block through life."

With the consciousness of mediocrity, which frustrated her mother's intentions that she should be striking and impressive, poor Harriet felt a conviction that she never should fulfil the expectations of superiority which were continually excited on her account.

But the faintest refusal to be called into notice roused her mother's well-known irritable temper to such violence, that, yielding through fear, she gradually endeavoured to assert her own dignity, and to make herself somebody in the eyes of the world.

The great Lord Bacon, in one of his essays, has these words :—" Wonderful is the case of boldness in civil business : What first ?—Boldness.—What second and third ?—Boldness."—

Without having read, or perhaps heard of Lord Bacon, Mrs. Bartley instinctively made his maxim the rule and guide of her life ; possessing in an eminent degree that decided confidence in her own powers, which Lord Bacon, in more simple language, denominates boldness ; and as it is the peculiar property of the quality his Lordship alludes to, to occasion the proprietor of it no inconvenience, however it may stand in the way of other people, she had reaped such substantial benefit from the possession of it, that she was authorized with some justice to recommend it fervently to the use of her daughter. The young lady herself, finding that in the ordinary run of society in a provincial town it is not very difficult to raise a name for acquirements, particularly with the assistance of Lord Bacon's specific, did not eventually shrink from doing what she could to confirm to the multitude that she was, as her mother assured them, in spite of

her excessive timidity, a girl of first-rate talents and endowments. In addition to these personages, Mr. Henley had increased his party by the company of Dr. Brown, the resident Rector of Belton; a learned man, an elderly man, a single man, and, generally speaking, a very silent man; fond of literature, and a scientific amateur in music; but reserved in his habits, and averse from society; seldom leaving home, except when drawn from it by the attraction of some gratifying performance in the art he particularly admired.

It was with a view of giving him pleasure, in hearing Eliza sing, that Mr. Henley had now invited him. When dinner was announced, Mr. Henley handed out Mrs. Bartley, and Sir George was preparing to step forward with similar politeness to escort Eliza, but young Bartley, with his usual happy ease, gave a sort of jump before him, and, seizing the reluctant hand of Miss Rivers, to

whom, with his puns and his pertness, he was an object of particular avoidance, he glided off with her, to the no small amusement of Sir George, who was left in a state of wonder to admire his assurance, and take care of his sister, between whom and Eliza he occupied a seat at table.

And there, Mr. William Bartley having the office of helping a tongue, which gave him the happy opportunity of making many apposite remarks, to say nothing of their novelty, Eliza conceived that in leaving him to the full exercise of his fancy, she might be at leisure to listen to, probably, more agreeable conversation from Sir George.

But the important business of the dinner-table, and the common attentions which accompany it, engaged them till the appearance of the dessert. An opportunity was then afforded for an enlargement of their topic; and Sir George, in making the enquiry, "Are you likely to

remain in Fairfield during the summer?" gave promise of an improving dialogue.

Unfortunately Eliza's reply, "I believe I shall be stationary here," striking upon that lively organ in young Bartley's pericranium, which Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, peradventure, denominates portiveness, or wit, he immediately bent over to his sister, "Harriet! Harriet!"—

Harriet was in the midst of describing to Louisa Henley "the sweetest dress, with such a lovely flounce, that Lady Somebody wore at the Assize Ball," and no vociferation could she attend to till she concluded.

But her inflexible brother would be heard; and, in defiance of Eliza's freezing look of contempt at his interruption, and familiarity in leaning before her whilst he was trying to catch his sister's attention, he still continued his "Harriet! Harriet!" till she turned round with "Well, brother!"

"I know you are an eternal scribe,

and I can tell you something to your advantage."

Harriet, quite sure that it was something which would require it, prepared a ready smile.

"If you want either pens, ink, or paper for the next three months, you must come to Miss Rivers, and she will supply you."

Miss Bartley's smile expanded into a laugh, as she enquired "How so?"

"Because she is going to be *stationary* during the summer."

"*Stationary!* ah! very good; very fair! Miss Henley, what do you think William says? he is so droll!" and then the excess of her laughter preventing her, as Mr. William thought, from doing justice to his *jeu d'esprit*, he repeated it himself, unappalled by the petrifying silence with which Eliza regarded him as he turned to her, repeating, "But isn't it so, Miss Rivers? did you not say so?"

The mirth which this flash of genius

elicited having yielded to the monotonous hum of old Mr. Bartley's political discussion, which, much to Eliza's relief, the son thought it necessary to illustrate, by adding to it his observations, she repeated her last reply to Sir George, adding an enquiry, "whether he had any thoughts of lengthening his stay at Fairfield beyond the fortnight he had first proposed?"

"I believe not; I expect a friend in the course of next week, with whom I am engaged to make a tour of two or three months."

"To the Continent?"

"Yes; we purpose going as far as Geneva. I hope to be here again in November, for a month, during the hunting season."

"You have not long been returned from Paris, I think, Sir George?"

"About a month."

"Were you pleased with France?"

"Yes; pretty well. But not under-

standing the language, I was soon tired of it. I felt very little inducement to stay longer."

Finding there was nothing to be produced from Paris, she betook herself to London as a last resource.

"Have you been in town lately?"

"I am just come from thence. I was a month at the Clarendon; but one is soon wearied of the same dull round. Excepting Ascot and Epsom (where, by the bye, I was confoundedly taken in), I never passed a more stupid season in my life."

"But with the Theatres, the Opera, Argyle Rooms, Hanover Square Rooms, and the various exhibitions!"—

"O! pardon me," interrupted Sir George, with a smile, "those are places with which I have very little to do. One goes to them, to be sure, because every body else does; but as for the pleasure of the business, I imagine it is reserved

for the country novices, who come up once a year to stare and be amused."

"You are not an admirer of the fine arts then, I doubt, Sir George? You do not, as Lady Townly says, 'doat upon a play,' or 'at an opera expire?'"

"Except with the excessive heat, I believe I never was in danger of dissolution."

"But music—oh you must love music. I am sure you *must* love music?"

"I am sure it is in your power to make me love it," he replied, with a polite bow; "but hitherto, if I must be ingenuous"—He hesitated.

"Oh yes, pray be ingenuous," said Eliza, with a smile; "nothing pleases me so much as candour."

"Then, if I dare make the avowal, the music of a pack in full cry has infinitely more charms for me than all the Italian bravuras, or what d'ye call 'em, of Fodor or Ambrogetti."

“Heavens! what a confession!” Eliza was about to cast upon him a look of horror; but, raising her eyes, she read in his smiling and very handsome face such an expression of good-humour, that she could scarcely find it in her heart to do more than smile herself, and shake her head at him, and lament in her secret soul that such an agreeable *looking* creature should be such a lost man. And now Sir George, though not gifted with any more penetration than was absolutely necessary to carry him safely through the world, divining that enough had been said to prove him utterly valueless and unimportant upon some particular subjects, felt a natural anxiety to advert to those points in his acquirements, wherein he conceived it likely he might shew to more advantage; and recurring to his favourite theme of hunting, he enquired of Eliza, “if she never ventured to join the chace?”

“ Do you then really imagine I have so little value for this neck of mine ?”

“ I will answer for your safety ; do let me prevail upon you next season to make a trial. Of course you ride on horseback ?”

“ I never have had an opportunity, but I think I should like it.”

“ Never rode on horseback ! You that would look so well when mounted ! Do permit me the honour of riding out with you while I am here. I have the prettiest little mare—just the thing for you ; she canters beautifully. Do but name your hour, and let us begin to-morrow morning.”

Eliza was half tempted to accede to his request ; but before she could reply, Mrs. Bartley, who had watched with a jealous eye the Baronet’s marked attention to her, and neglect of her daughter, interrupted her with an enquiry, when

she expected to see her friends Lady Delville and Miss Brooke?

"In the course of next week, I believe, Ma'am."

"You must be quite lost without them, I am sure, Miss Rivers?"

"I flatter myself I am never lost for the want of any society while I have my music, my books, not to mention such kind friends as Mr. and Miss Henley."

"O, true, I had forgot you were a *literary* lady."—Then, as if fearing the *sneer* might be too evident, she proceeded to soften it down, by adding, "I will say that, for you and my daughter Harriet, I believe you are as independent of the world as most people; put a book into the hands of either of you, and you want no other amusement."

"I am always proud of your good opinion," said Eliza, with a sarcastic bend; and Louisa, knowing the enmity which an exuberance of envy on one side, and profound contempt on the

other, had occasioned between these two ladies, thought it advisable to put a period to any further discourse, by giving the signal for retiring to the drawing-room.

CHAP. IV.



THAT interesting interregnum which occurs in the society of ladies before the arrival of coffee and the gentlemen, was passed by the present party in discussions upon this "new man," as Eliza styled Sir George.

Mrs. Bartley thought him "an intelligent looking young man; but not so pleasant to-day, as he was the other morning, when he called upon us; I mean the last time: don't you remember, Harriet, my dear, you played to him; and he was so delighted?"

Harriet assented; adding, to Eliza's astonishment, that he was "so fond of music!"

“Indeed! you surprize me! it was but just now he told me with infinite *naiveté*, that he preferred the music of a pack of hounds to the sweetest strains of our best performers.”

Both Mrs. Bartley and Harriet looked a little disconcerted by this remark ; but the former turning to Louisa, evaded any further discussion of the baronet’s passion for music, by introducing, what commonly proves an inexhaustible subject—dress and fashion ; like the war song of old Timotheus, “ never-ending, still beginning,” being happily always at hand to prevent that inanity of discourse, which, when deprived of the exhilarating presence of the other sex, will sometimes befall the fair. Sir George was the first to attend the summons to coffee, and as soon as he entered, took his seat by Eliza. He soon resumed the conversation which Mrs. Bartley had interrupted at dinner ; again intreating her to “ lose no more time, but appoint the very

next morning for beginning a course of riding on horseback."

"I don't know what faith is to be put in that pretty little mare of your's!"

Sir George, of course, reiterated his assurances of "perfect safety," "gentlest creature in the world," "need not go out of a walk," "utterly impossible to meet with any accident," &c. &c., till Eliza, always willing to grasp at novelty, in any shape, gave no very reluctant consent to his sending up his groom with the horses at eleven o'clock on the following day, when she promised to be ready for her equestrian performances.

This doughty point was just settled, and Sir George walked off with her empty tea-cup, when young Bartley, who had been silent for about the space of three minutes and a half, now loitered up to her, and throwing himself into the chair which the baronet had just vacated, asked her, "if she did not think Melmoth a pleasant good-humoured fellow?"

That happy faculty which, as we have observed, my Lord Bacon so commends, removed from Mr. William at all times any unpleasant apprehension of approaching too nearly to familiarity in his discourse ; therefore, though he could see, as in fact it was impossible not to see, the haughty air with which Eliza asked him “ if it were *Sir George Melmoth* he was speaking of ? ” he read in it no transient disgust at the freedom of his manner, but very naturally attributed it to her being provoked at his interrupting their *tête-à-tête*.

Next to the lively imagination of young Mr. Bartley, nothing was more devoutly abhorrent to her than the regular hum-drum conversation of old Mr. Bartley. Not but what he was a merry man in his way, particularly when he was elevated with an extraordinary glass of wine ; and as he liked to talk to the young ladies, he saw no reason why he should not occupy another chair on the

other side of Eliza, and fill up those pauses which occurred in his son's eloquence, when that fluent little gentleman stopped to take breath.

"And so, Miss Rivers, well, what you've got the young man by the side of you! Ah, that's right; well, well, that's right!"

"Miss Rivers is always delighted to have me near her, Sir," said the arch youth, magnanimously glorying in his impertinence, and pleased to have an opportunity of paying her off with a little teasing, for the superabundant contempt with which she had often requited some of his most felicitous epigrams and *bon mots*.

"There's a fine fellow for you! there's a conceited chap! Miss Rivers, why don't you scold him? 'pon my life, Will, you're too bad; but, egad, boy, I don't wonder at you: you're a chip of the old block, as they say;" and the old gentle-

man chuckled and laughed till he was almost convulsed with merriment, at finding himself the father of so hopeful a son.

To Eliza's great relief, Miss Henley now approached her, accompanied with the solemn Dr. Brown, who came to prefer a request for some music. As the pleasure of hearing her sing was the ostensible object of his visit, she was left without any excuse for refusing to comply with his desire; else the idea of sitting down to perform before any one who had candidly acknowledged a preference for the music of a pack of hounds, was not altogether the most likely to animate her into any very striking or impressive display of her powers.

She looked round to see how Sir George was disposed of. He was talking, or rather listening, to Mrs. Bartley, who was descanting with her usual air of authority upon some subject, or no

subject ; in either case it was pretty much the same, being at all times to the same effect.

As soon as Sir George perceived Eliza approach the instrument, he joined her. " I did not know (though indeed it was very stupid of me not to suppose it) that you were a performer, when I made such an uncourtly speech at dinner."

" O ! I freely forgive you ; and can only grieve that I am compelled to commit this violence upon your feelings, by reducing you to the necessity of exchanging for mine, the much sweeter strains of *Basto*, and *Ponto*, and *Dido*, and *Cato*."

Sir George, though obliged to laugh at her oddity, here interrupted her, to entreat " that she would not think him such a Goth, such a savage, as to understand him literally ; he only meant ——" and, fortunately, to rescue him from ' blundering round a meaning,' Mrs. Bartley, with her daughter leaning on her arm, here approached them.

“What are we to be favoured with?” she enquired.

Eliza turned to the Doctor to know “if there was any particular air he wished to hear?”

“I must be entirely decided by your taste, ma’am,” was his concise reply.

“Will you sing that beautiful Italian air you sung last night?” said Louisa; then turning to Mrs. Bartley, who passed in her own judgment for a first-rate connoisseur, “I think you would be pleased with it.”

“I know the prevailing opinion is so much in favour of it that it may seem pedantic to object to Italian music,” replied that lady, “but I must confess myself no very great admirer of it.”

Eliza asked, “Why?” with an air that seemed to say, “though I am sure of hearing a great deal of nonsense, I am willing to indulge you with an opportunity of venting it.”

"Because," replied Mrs. Bartley, "it is so invariably marked by affectation—so full of *la* and *li*, and *ma* and *mi*, that it is to me the most uninteresting music I ever meet with."

"Perhaps you do not understand Italian," said Eliza, meaning the remark to be perfectly innocent and common-place, but which the arch expression of her countenance converted into a sort of sarcasm.

"That, I should suppose, would be no obstacle to my admiring the music; but if it were, in my case, it could not apply to Miss Bartley, who, although I may venture to say, a mistress of the Italian language as well as French, has the same antipathy to that particular school of music which I have. Have you not Harriet?"

"I do not particularly admire it, certainly."

"If you mean to say that, in general, you prefer the works of the ancient com-

posers to those of the modern, I quite agree with you," said Eliza; "but when you would totally condemn the Italian school, let me remind you of the music in Figaro, in *La Clemenza di Tito*—in fifty more that I could name; that exquisite duet of 'Ah Perdoni' is, of itself, enough to immortalize a composer; and, in the playful style, what more fascinating than the charming trio, 'La mia Dorabella,' in *Così fan' tutte*. Surely, Miss Bartley, you must admire all this?"

Miss Bartley not choosing to acknowledge that she knew nothing about '*all this*,' remarked, that "she preferred the music in the Messiah."

Eliza, who either did not know or had forgotten, Miss Bartley's method of making an escape from any subject on which she was uninformed, was, for a moment, completely puzzled by this reply.

"The music in the Messiah!" she repeated—"why, to be sure, any music in

the world must suffer by being brought into comparison with that sublime production ; only that the difference between a sacred oratorio and a comic opera is so self-evident, that it seems rather ludicrous (she did not *say* foolish) to bring them at all into competition."

Young Bartley, who, as soon as he perceived any argument going forward, had tumbled over a chair, and nearly upset his father in his vehemence to enlist himself on some side of the contest, now took up the cause for his sister ; " And why should it be so ludicrous, Miss Rivers ?" said he.

" Because ;—" she paused a moment.

" Because it is so !" and he laughed ; " Excuse me—but there is a pithiness quite admirable in the reasoning of a lady : ' It is so, because it is so ; I don't know why, but I know it is so ! '—But forgive me, Miss Rivers, you know my *veneration* for the fair sex."

Eliza *dared* not trust herself to make any reply ; but preserved a dignified silence ; whilst Mrs. Bartley, affecting to compose her mirth, and apologizing for it by saying, “ It was really very silly, but she could not help it ; William had always so much vivacity in his remarks,” at last collected gravity and grandeur enough to make, what she conceived, a most pertinent and acute observation.

“ However ludicrous it may appear,” said she, “ it is certain that every thing in the fine arts must submit to be made the subject of comparison.”

“ According to that doctrine, then,” said Eliza, “ if I hear any person admiring the ‘ Paradise Lost,’ I may remark (without hazard of being thought crazy or foolish), that I do not think it so sprightly as the ‘ Rape of the Lock.’ ”

“ The remark would certainly be just.”

“ It might ; but I apprehend it would be rather out of place.”

"Well, but Madam, we are losing time," said Dr. Brown, who, in a literary dispute between two ladies, conceived a great possibility of being regaled with a vast deal of what, in respect to the fair sex, I shall forbear to designate by the term he might have mentally used, and simply call, a superfluity of words.

Eliza, knowing the Doctor to be rather an admirer of the old masters, had, in the first instance, selected for his gratification, that sweet song from Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, "Heart, the seat of soft delight." But as Mrs. Bartley had presumed to set herself in opposition to Italian music, there was, of course, an indispensable necessity of intimating to her that her opinion went for nothing, by sitting down to the performance of an Italian bravura, as full of long divisions, and *la* and *li*, and *ma* and *mi*, as well might be. For this purpose she made choice of Vinci's celebrated "*Vo solcando*," to which she did ample jus-

tice, by the chaste neatness of her execution, and the touching sweetness of her tones. The Doctor was animated into something like energy in his compliments to her. "A charming song, Ma'am!—exquisitely performed,"—he observed, turning to Mrs. Bartley, who, in a low conversation with her daughter, accompanied with divers significant nods, was expressing certain criticisms upon the song and the singer, which her dread of Dr. Brown's real scientific knowledge made her fearful of hazarding aloud.

Mrs. Bartley slightly made answer, that "Miss Rivers had received great advantages, in the instruction of the best masters."

"True Madam," he replied; "but there is a certain something called taste, or feeling, which no masters can teach; and herein it is that Miss Rivers excels."

Eliza received the compliment as a person would to whom praise is no new thing; and returning a slight bow of

thanks to him for his politeness, she begged "to resign her seat to Miss Bartley."

Louisa Henley, who never said any thing, but observed every thing, had been revolving in her own mind the whole evening, what was to be done about Miss Bartley's playing. She feared it would scarcely be tolerated by the Doctor, who was no courtier, either by nature or art; and she knew that the neglect of proposing it would be the most mortal affront she could offer to Mrs. Bartley; she was not sorry, therefore, when Eliza thus rescued her from the dilemma she was in.

Miss Bartley, from a dread of the Doctor, declined playing; but Mrs. Bartley ended all opposition, by saying, with a look which was not to be disputed, "yes, yes, Harriet; that little air you were playing this morning; I believe it has not been published many days; probably it will be new to you," addressing Eliza,

and adding in a low voice, "if I could *but* conquer that *mauvaise honte* of Harriet's; I assure you it is the only obstacle,—a perfect musician otherwise!" with a glance of deep meaning and a nod of the head, which she meant should say, "don't you think you are to have no rival near the throne." She then took her station at the piano, to be ready to point out the particular beauties of her daughter's performance. With real timidity, Miss Bartley began a well known air, recently set with variations by a modern composer. Dr. Brown, after he had listened with some attention to the subject, and a few bars of the first variation, took up a music book that lay near him, and seemed to *imply* that he had heard quite enough.

"Good heavens!" thought Eliza, as Miss Bartley, without taste or feeling, or any thing more than the mere mechanical power of playing one note after another as fast as she could, was labouring

over a composition that seemed to be endless; "how intoxicating, how overwhelming is the force of vanity and self-love! This mother is not absolutely devoid of sense, nor is this daughter; and yet neither of them can perceive that they are making themselves ridiculous, and that we are all thinking so!"

Without being embarrassed by any notions of this kind, the young lady went through her performance with great perseverance, diversifying it by now and then pausing to recollect what came next, while her mother hummed a bar or two to help her out, protesting, "that was it;" Miss Bartley assuring her "that was *not* it;" though she could not exactly remember what was *it*.

"I would not give sixpence for a bushel of such music, Madam," said Dr. Brown, in a whisper to Eliza, as Miss Bartley left the instrument. Both Mrs. Bartley and Harriet, fortunately for themselves, possessed none of that deli-

cacy of feeling which requires, in music, something beyond the mere capacity of making a noise. With them it was nothing more than a certain something which it was the fashion to admire, and which therefore all accomplished young ladies must understand. Like other fine things, it was to be had for money ; and, in buying four or five years' instruction for her daughter, just the same as she bought her new caps and new hats, Mrs. Bartley conceived that she had effectually furnished her with as much musical knowledge, and as many new dresses as other young ladies possessed. Dr. Brown was now very urgent with Eliza for another song, Sir George adding many polite entreaties to the same purpose, though in truth he would have preferred descanting upon his prospects for the morrow, and the merits of his " pretty little ma. e."

But Mrs. Bartley, with a keen perception that " enough is as good as a feast,"

imagining that as one "little air" sufficed from Miss Bartley, one song was as much as fell to the share of Miss Rivers, "was very sorry she must be deprived of the gratification of hearing another song, but her carriage had been announced, and she was fearful of being out late."

To Eliza's surprize, not being perfectly aware of the quick sense of hearing which Nature had added to her other bounteous gifts to Mr. Bartley the younger, he added, in wishing her good night, "at what hour to-morrow morning am I to be here to ride out with you?" "At any hour that I shall name, when I request the honour of your company," said Eliza, trying to treat his impudence as a jest, though scarcely able to conceal her displeasure at being thus familiarly approached.

Old Mr. Bartley, with whom the ceremony of shaking the two hands of every body round the room was not so quickly

dispatched as the elegant bobbing curt-sies of his wife and daughter, had not quite dislocated the wrists of Eliza in his vehement "*bon soir*" (the two French words he understood, and always made use of, in giving a benediction after the sun was safely gone down), when the shrill sharp voice of his helpmate, summoning him by the title of "Mr. B., Mr. B.," warned him to be expeditious.

"With due submission, Mr. Drone, good mother!" was the last sprightly effusion of the clever little son. The old gentleman, in an enthusiasm of delight, clapping him on the back, and abusing him for a "saucy knave, whose wit couldn't spare even his own father," hobbled after him down stairs, calling out to Miss Rivers at every step he took, "to make the boy mend his manners—to read him a lecture—not to put up with his impudence—to—"

"Come, get into the carriage, for heaven's sake, Mr. Bartley—and hold

your tongue," said his lady, as she drew up the glass with an air that made him tremble and be silent. As soon as the Belton party had driven off, Eliza endeavoured to make the Doctor amends for the torture he had endured during the performance of Miss Bartley's little air; and in the delight with which he listened to her, she had reason to suppose he considered himself amply repaid for his past disappointment.

Sir George was the last to take leave, and in doing so again reminded Eliza of her appointment for the morning.

Mr. Henley looked a little earnestly at her, as a father would whose daughter was making an appointment with a young man almost a stranger. But Eliza had, almost from her infancy, been uncontrolled in all her actions; and the present instance she considered as much too trifling to name to her guardian. Without therefore observing, or choosing

to observe, his anxious glance, she wished the Baronet good night, and told him "she would be ready in the morning."

CHAP. V.



SIR George Melmoth had certainly made no very favourable impression on Eliza. It was clear he was not a man of taste. He had listened to her music indeed with great politeness (a circumstance which his admiration of her beauty and sprightly manners made no very great effort of self-denial), but it was evident he was not a man of *mind*—he was not *the* man after all. He was still, however, a gentleman-like man, of pleasing manners, and he did beyond a doubt do all possible justice to her personal charms—this she was *sure* of. He could admire her, if he could do nothing else, and a fortnight's fervent admiration, or

even a week (for a week of his stay only remained) was very pretty light amusement, and made a sort of change in her way of life.

"May I venture to inquire," said Mr. Henley, as they were sitting at breakfast the next morning, "whether Sir George, upon farther acquaintance, turns out the 'pleasant, proper sort of person,' you expected?"

"Why—no—I think not, exactly."

"You abandon him, then, as quite hopeless?"

"Utterly hopeless, to be sure, in the way of sentiment; but I think I can turn him to some account yet."

Mr. Henley smiled—Louisa did not; she was unusually grave.

"And pray, Louisa, how do you like Sir George?" said Eliza.

"Very well."

"He is certainly genteel, and agreeable in his manners; and I should rather

imagine him pleased with the society of ladies : should not you ?”

“ I cannot judge on so short an acquaintance.”

“ I might have been sure of that reply,” thought Eliza.

Mr. Henley’s penetrating smile was too intelligible ; it said very plainly—
“ Now you want her to say, that he was evidently pleased with the society of *one* lady ; and I cannot help being malicious enough to be glad that she has disappointed you.”

There was a short pause ; Eliza sighed for the absence of Miss Brooke ; “ she *was* a friend—there was some sympathy of taste between them ; but *this* freezing mass of apathy ! !—it never could be endured much longer.”

Willing, however, to preserve her gaiety for the arrival of Sir George, she repelled with great resolution the approach of one of those fits of fretful and capricious humour, which were too often

produced by the most trifling circumstances, and which the nature of her education had never taught her the necessity of subduing, till the season for improvement was too far advanced.

After watching with deep attention the variation of her beautiful face, which, from an expression of sparkling mirth, suddenly sunk to an appearance of abstracted melancholy, then, as if with an effort to shake off a corroding sensation, glistened again with vivacity, Mr. Henley interrupted a longer silence than usually subsisted in Eliza's presence : " You do not, then, utterly renounce this Baronet of our's !"

" Far from it ; though a man may be good for nothing as to taste and sentiment, he may be a very good man for all that."

" Indubitably."

" And if Nature has denied him the gift of genius in one way, it is to be presumed she has made it up to him in another."

“ One may venture upon such an inference.”

“ Therefore as I cannot have him just what I wish, I must of necessity have him what I can.”

Louisa looked at her with astonishment, as much as to say, “ how can you condescend to talk such nonsense.”

But Mr. Henley, with more toleration, made a bow of acquiescence to Eliza's last observation, and replied, “ the preliminaries are all settled then ; and you are to *have* him at all events. Probably as the lack of genius presents such an insuperable obstacle, you mean to waive the previous ceremony of all that ‘ pretty incident and striking emotion,’ we were talking about the other day ?”

“ Have him” ! and she laughed—“ no, not in real good earnest ; I have neither hope nor intention of making Sir George, in sad and sober certainty, my own.”

“ As an ally, then, to help you to dis-
ose of a few idle hours in a little harm-

less flirtation." He spoke in jest, but there was a tone which slightly, *very* slightly implied reproof.

Eliza's quick feelings a little recoiled under it; but she replied with good humour, "as an instructor in the art of horsemanship, I now take Sir George as my ally."

"And if by any unforeseen chance you should ever intend to *take* him for better and for worse"—he paused, not knowing how to express what he wished to insinuate, without seeming to assume the authority of the guardian. But Eliza's ready penetration saved him all difficulty. "In any case of that kind," said she with a blushing smile, "Mr. Henley must be well aware, that the first step would be to *take* his advice."

"You are going to ride out with Sir George this morning, are you not?" said Louisa.

Eliza assented.

"Then I will go down to the school in your stead.

“ Ah! the poor school! I knew there was something I ought to think of—but will you be so good!—you are very good to me, indeed, Louisa.”

Louisa gave her a smile, and a sigh; and Eliza proceeded:—“ And, let me see!” getting up for her work-bag, and turning it inside out, to search amidst a chaos of materials for something she had lost, “ what upon earth have I done with that bit of paper? There were two little unhappy children, all rags and tatters, I promised something to; I forget who—or what—or any thing about it—only that I made a memorandum of it, and now I’ve lost it.”

“ But another day will do,” said Louisa.

“ Indeed it will not. I have put it off from day to day for, I verily believe, more than a month, and I will send Susan over to Belton this very day—what *can* have become of that paper?—

I *do* believe—if you *have* got it, Mr. Henley”——She looked at him, half laughing—half confused.

Mr. Henley had been smiling all the time she was bustling about her loss ; but she was too much engaged to remark it. Catching at last a glimpse of his countenance, a sort of idea presented itself that he knew something about it ; and almost at the same moment a confused remembrance of having stuck it as a mark, in one of his books that she was reading, darted across her mind.

Slowly drawing out his pocket-book, which Eliza (from some circumstances best known to herself) could scarcely refrain from twitching out of his hand to get quicker possession of the lost document, “ if this should prove the stray memorial,” said he, “ I can only apologize for its being in my possession, by saying that I found it in one of my books, and involuntarily glancing over the first

two or three lines, I was impelled to go on with it ; in fact, I must plead guilty to the perusal of the whole.”

Eliza, with a face suffused with the deepest crimson, but smiling nevertheless, extended her hand for it.

“ Not without conditions,” said he ; —“ you cannot expect it without conditions.”

“ Oh, but indeed I do.”

“ Look at Louisa ; think of her curiosity ; you must permit me to—”

“ No, no indeed ; I have not the composure of that heroic man in the *Spectator*, who so patiently sat out the recital of his own motley production. Pray give it me—I must have it.”

“ Well, if you must,”—and Mr. Henley, though with reluctance, resigned the precious *morceau* ; which Eliza no sooner received than she hastened out of the room, and sought her own, for the purpose of perusing her effusions, of which she retained no very distinct re-

membrance, but a vague sort of recollection, that amongst memoranda for frocks and petticoats, figured also the commencement of a poem, which she had meditated, by way of beguiling the dejection of her spirits, soon after her arrival at the Rectory.

The first thing that greeted her eyes, in letters much larger than her usual delicate style of writing, was the following title, or titles, for she appeared to fluctuate between

ALFRED AND ERMINIA.—CANTO I.

ALFRED.—PART I.

ERMINIA.—A TALE.

And after a few curvettings from her Pegasus, she appeared to have set off at a gentle rate, as follows:—

The sighing gale, scarce rising into sound,
With gentle undulation murmurs round;
The fragrant flowers beneath its pressure bend,
And from their dewy leaves fresh sweetness send;
Now stealing forth with faint uncertain light,
She softly comes—the radiant Queen of Night!

But indistinct at first her trembling ray,
 'Till every vestige of departing day
 Hath died away—then with chaste beam serene
 She pours her beauty on the sleeping scene.
 Oh rapturous hour ! with soul and feeling fraught,
 The still communion of sublimest thought !
 When solemn night maintains her earliest sway,
 And day's meridian glare hath pass'd away.
 To one fair pilgrim in this vale of tears,
 A youthful mourner in her blooming years,
 Who turn'd from laughing day with sickening grief,
 How oft thy lov'd return has brought relief !
 Erminia, parted from her bosom's love,
 In this sequester'd vale was wont to rove ;
 Here, where in happier days, in this sweet shade,
 With Alfred dear, how often had she stray'd !
 How often lean'd upon his manly breast,
 How often to his doating heart been press'd !
 But ah ! how transient are the hours of bliss,
 If bliss there be in such a world as this !—
 Like the soft breeze that fans the early year,
 When the first smiling days of Spring are near ;
 When slumbering Nature in her wintry dress,
 Wakes to new light, and life, and loveliness.
 Scarce hath the bright illusion charm'd our eyes,
 When clouds, and storms, and howling winds arise.
 Three blissful months on downy wings had flown,
 Bound in one fate, their pains, their pleasures, one ;

Ne'er had a sigh escap'd from either heart,
 'Till cruel fate decreed that they must part.
 Glory had mark'd —

“ *Mem.*—To buy Judy Pratt a pair of shoes, and John Wilson a hat ; and five yards of stuff for a frock for Betsy Smith, some dark colour most useful—Mr. Sampson's, Market-place—Mrs. Thompson, the milliner.—One yard white satin.—Five ditto ribbon, 2d.—Gloves.—The music shop.—Watch-ribbon for Mr. Henley.—Pride and Prejudice—Sense and Sensibility.”

Though provoked with her carelessness, Eliza could not refrain from laughing aloud, when she pictured to herself the gravity with which Mr. Henley commenced the perusal of this effusion, and the ludicrous surprize with which he must have found himself suddenly whirled from the top of Parnassus to the plain turnpike-road leading from Fairfield to Belton.

Having made an extract from the solid, substantial subject-matter relating to John Wilson and Judy Pratt, &c. &c., to prevent any further wandering on the part of Alfred and Erminia, she carried them down stairs, and forthwith made a sacrifice of them at the kitchen fire. Peace to their manes!!

Sir George was punctual to his time; and having received a parting benediction from Mr. Henley, and a dry caution: "not to attempt a five-barred gate the *first* morning," Eliza with great spirit mounted the "pretty little mare," and set forth; Louisa calling after her with more vehemence than she commonly used, "don't attempt to canter, pray, don't, Eliza, dear."

"A nice, little, good-humoured girl, that!" observed Sir George, rapidly getting into intimacy with his fair companion.

Eliza testified with much warmth to the merit of Louisa; and Sir George pro-

ceeded "really, women in general are so high flown, and so abominably clever, that it is quite a relief to meet with those who are devoid of affectation and conceit."

"Ingenuous youth!" thought Eliza, "your attention is likely to be more flattering than I hoped for, considering that by your own confession it is only prompted by the hope of finding a woman a simpleton."

On Monday, Sir George told her, he expected his friend, Mr. Waldegrave, with whom, on the Wednesday morning, he was to depart for the Continent.

"If you were one of those blue stocking ladies," said Sir George, "which I am happy to say I am sure you are not (making her a profound bow, which Eliza as profoundly returned), you would be delighted with my friend Waldegrave."

"Is he one of the *literati*, then?"

“ Quite so ; I assure you he is in high request amongst the fine people in town. But I don’t know whether he is indebted wholly to his taste and talents for their favour.”

“ Perhaps he is a gentleman of rank and fortune ?”

“ His fortune I believe to be good, and he is highly connected, being nearly related to Lord A——. He is in parliament also, which gives him an established place in society. In short, Waldegrave is altogether a person who knows and is known to every body. We have been intimate from boys, for we were at school together at Eton, where I was his fag.”

“ He must be senior to you, then, I imagine ?”

“ Yes ; perhaps five or six years.”

Eliza had a great fancy to know whether he was married, but she did not like to ask the question ; not but what it was the most natural curiosity in the world, and

might seem to follow as a matter of course from such a conversation. Sir George, however, illustrated this doubtful subject, by continuing :

“ It is a pity he does not marry, for I think he would make a very good husband, if he would but leave off a shocking ridiculous habit he has got, of pretending to fall in love with every woman he sees, and making verses upon her, and all manner of nonsense.”

“ That would certainly be advisable, if it were only for the peace and comfort of his wife !”

“ Oh ! as for that, if she knew as much of him as I do, she would e'en let him take his course, as an easier proceeding than endeavouring to break him of it. For, after all, it is nothing more than a habit ; he does it without thinking of it, and often without knowing it.”

“ He absolutely does make right earnest love ?”

“ No, not right earnest; only make believe.”

“ But those miserable women take it in earnest?”

“ Sometimes, when they don’t know him; when they do, they take it as a matter of course. They know he cannot possibly help it, for he cannot talk to a woman in a common sort of way.”

“ This must be a curious sort of character,” thought Eliza.

Having prolonged their ride till she thought Mr. Henley would suppose it might be prudent for her to make her appearance at the Rectory again, they returned home; where she found Louisa anxiously watching for her at the window, and almost astonished to receive her without some fracture or contusion.

Sir George, without much entreaty, was prevailed upon by Mr. Henley to relinquish his plan of returning to a soli-

tary meal at the Hall, and as their dinner was upon the point of being served, he made one of their party ; and in taking leave, engaged them all to dine with him on the following Monday.

CHAP. VI.



ON Monday morning Eliza's heart was rejoiced by the sight of her friends, Lady Delville and Miss Brooke. A note dispatched by the latter, about five minutes after their arrival, late on Sunday night, had nearly sent her down to them immediately, though it was then past ten o'clock. But on Mr. Henley's surmising that "perhaps Lady Delville would not be leaving home again *very* early the next morning, and that he thought Eliza might *venture* to run the hazard of postponing her visit till then," she deferred her intention.

Immediately after breakfast she set forward to walk, at least a mile, under a broiling sun, and with a pace which only

Eaton, the pedestrian, could possibly have rivalled.

To attempt any delineation of a meeting (after an absence of some months) between two young ladies engaged in an immortal friendship, would be equally presumptuous and unavailing. Having merely observed that it was in strict conformity with established *etiquette*, I shall leave them to the first rapturous discussion of *all* that had happened in Fairfield and Belton, and London and Paris, and Calais and Dover, since last they met—and dedicate a few words to a brief sketch of Lady Delville.

Her ladyship was of genteel origin, and, in process of time, had the good luck to get married to a worthy alderman of the corporation of Belton, who, in carrying up an address to St. James's, happened one day to get knighted, and returned home Sir William Delville, very much to the delight of his wife, and very much to the amusement of his neigh-

bours. Like other amusements, however, of a similar nature, it had but a temporary duration. The good people having laughed at his title, and wondered at his folly; and the ladies, every individual of them, been “*very* sure that they never could call Mrs. Delville ‘*her ladyship*,’ without laughing in her face,” soon lost the novelty, and with the novelty their relish of the joke.

In the meanwhile, Sir William, having lived and flourished a proper time, and eat his due proportion of venison and turbot, chanced to die, and left his lady her title, and five hundred pounds a year towards the maintenance and support of it. As, fortunately, there was nothing else to be supported but her ladyship and her title, their union never having been blessed with any sweet pledges, this income, though small enough in any other hands, sufficed in those of Lady Delville; and but that she laid down the old family coach, and reduced her esta-

blishment to a man and two maid servants, and left the large house in the High Street at Belton, and took a cottage upon Fairfield common, and ornamented it, and denominated it 'Delville Fancy,' she might be said to move in the same sphere and keep up the same appearances as in the life-time of the worthy Sir William. As she had a good many friends and connexions, she was always very much engaged; and, in the benevolence of her heart, divided her valuable time amongst them as equally as she could. It might sound to her credit to say that she never lost a friend; and certainly she never did lose any one that she thought worth keeping.

In the estimation of the world at large she was considered "a very clever woman:" that is to say, she had as shrewd an insight into her own interest as any body living; and took, at all times, the readiest means of promoting it. Amongst her particular friends she

was the "most agreeable woman in the world"—*videlicet*, she knew very well, that most people, if not all people, are to be governed and led; and turned this way and that way, or any way, by administering that delectable potion, in the vulgar tongue, y'cleped flattery; only with the simple caution of tempering the dose to the age, sex, situation, and circumstances of the recipient.

In the opinion of Eliza Rivers, she was a "woman of the most pleasing manners, with great knowledge of the world, and much good judgment, obscured by a *little* affectation;—but who was perfect?"

Eliza Rivers was, from many circumstances, an object of consideration to Lady Delville; and, in particularly applying herself to the vanity and self-love of that young lady, her ladyship contrived to be presented to her view exactly in that point of observation which she herself thought proper.

Of Miss Brooke it may be sufficient to observe, that she was the daughter of a rich West Indian planter, who, losing his wife when this his only child was very young, transmitted her to the care of his sister, Lady Delville, to educate as she thought proper. With the assistance of masters, she had been entirely brought up under the auspices of her aunt; to whom she was a person of much importance, not merely from her being at present a source of great pecuniary advantages to her, but from the bright expectations which she looked forward to on her account for the future. This young lady was very much like all other young ladies, only that she possessed to her own share as much *sentiment*, as would have been reasonably sufficient for at least half a dozen. She was, what is commonly called, a fine girl; not so handsome as Miss Rivers, but handsome enough to be pardoned the mistake of sometimes supposing her-

self a first-rate beauty. Under this slight error in judgment, she had been for the last twelvemonths refusing with infinite scorn some three or four proposals of marriage, which the report of her being heiress to immense wealth had given her an opportunity of disdaining; and in expectation of that Duke or Marquis, or, at all events, Earl, who was to sigh, and with graceful dignity lay his coronet at her feet, she took no account of her more ignoble conquests, save and except that they were always detailed to “*dear aunt*” and “*dear Eliza* ;” to “*dear aunt*,” because she had always something pleasant to say to young people on such subjects; to “*dear Eliza*,” it formed the staple commodity of her discourse.

Sir George Melmoth having been discussed by the young ladies and the aunt in every possible shape, and (in consideration of his being handsome, and tolerably well behaved) finally dismissed, with a decision that he might be ad-

mitted to the honour of a trifling *flirtation*, the name of Mr. Waldegrave was then introduced.

“ Waldegrave !” repeated Miss Brooke.”

“ Waldegrave !” my Lady Delyville—
“ *certainement* ! beyond a doubt, Sophia, it is that most agreeable of men.”

“ Delightful creature !— Eliza, my dear love, you can have no conception of the infinity of good fortune that ~~has~~ befallen you.”

“ Where did you happen to meet him, Sophia ?”

“ At the hotel at Versailles ; he happened to be the only Englishman there that day, and hearing there were some English ladies (alas ! dire confession) without—without even *one* beau, he introduced himself to us, so gracefully—and went with us to the palace, and all the sights, and dined with us, and supped with us, and would have gone back to Paris with us, only that he was *com-*

pelled (how he dwelt upon the word, did he not, aunt?) *compelled*, and he sighed ; poor fellow, I think I see him now" (a look of deep abstraction, as if Miss Brooke were absorbed and lost in recollection) "*compelled* to go on to Fontainebleau, to join a friend."

As Eliza had been initiated into some of the mysteries of Mr. Waldegrave's character, she was at no loss to account for his sighing and memorable looks ; not but what she knew very well that, in any case, her dear Sophia's "*extreme susceptibility*, natural wish of meeting with a kindred soul, responsive to the warmth and tenderness of her affectionate heart!" &c. &c., too often led her into the error of mistaking the most common attentions of mere politeness for immediate and irrevocable attachments.

In fact, though Eliza's quick discernment of character prevented the possibility of her deceiving herself into a

belief that Miss Brooke was *not* a very vain, and a very affected young woman, she endeavoured to persuade herself that these errors were to be attributed to the misplaced affection of Lady Delville; who, instead of applying herself to the correction of her besetting sin of vanity, had done all in her power to nourish it, by continually flattering her upon the subject of her high pretensions. This was all very pardonable, Eliza thought; because it arose from an excess of affection for her niece; and, even if it were blameable in the highest degree, *she* ought to be the last person to see it; after the many proofs of kindness and regard they had both evinced for her. In short, Eliza was but nineteen, and was accessible to flattery.

“ And Mr. Waldegrave is coming this very day ?” said her Ladyship.

“ *If* he did but know, aunt, that we were returned,” said Miss Brooke.

“ Unquestionably we shall see him in the course of to-morrow, as he knows that we reside here.”

“ I scarcely think I ought to wish him to call,” observed Miss Brooke:—“ poor fellow !”

“ I have a great mind to tell her what Sir George said about him,” thought Eliza.

“ To be sure, my dear,” Lady Delville remarked, “ as it would be quite impossible for you to give him any encouragement—”

“ That, to be sure, is out of the question.”

“ But if he is so *very* agreeable,” Eliza ventured to observe—

“ He certainly is the most agreeable man I ever saw, but not *exactly* what I could wish :”—that is, he has not yet made me a direct proposal, Miss Brooke might have said.

“ How I wish you were going to dine with Sir George, to-day !”

"Are you going?"

"Yes."

"I wish we were; how can it be managed, dear aunt? how can it be managed?—but no—now I think of it, I do not wish it." Miss Brooke paused, and looked at Eliza with solemnity a moment—then proceeded: "I shall resign this dear Waldegrave to you, Eliza."

"Thank you," said Eliza, laughing; "I wonder whether Mr. Waldegrave would like the notion of being passed like a shuttlecock from one to the other?"

"I am quite in earnest, Eliza; I am sure he is the very man to please you."

"But to make your resignation of him at all valuable, my dear Sophia, it would be rather more to the purpose that I should be the very woman to please him."

"I should like to know who is the man that would not be pleased with Eliza Rivers?" obligingly observed Lady Delville.

"I never saw you look so well, Eliza," remarked Miss Brooke; "and you must

dress yourself to advantage, you know : though as you are in mourning you cannot have any great variety. What is your best gown? how is it made? O! my dear, I have got *such* a dress to shew you! it was the only one to be had in Paris; but come up stairs and you shall see it."

Eliza followed to the *sanctum sanctorum*; and Miss Brooke, ringing for her maid, desired her to bring "this box, and that trunk, and that parcel," till at last the catalogue seemed to be completed; and Eliza, taking a seat advantageous to the prospect of finery she was to contemplate, prepared herself to wonder, and applaud, with propriety.

"I assure you, Eliza, he is the most elegant man I ever saw;" then going to the door, opening it, shutting it again as if to be sure no one was there, she proceeded: "I could not mention it before my aunt, because you know she is so anxious about one, I don't like to tell

her every little nonsensical thing of the kind ; but in my life (with an air of deep solemnity) I never saw a man *so—so—*

“ So *very* attentive ? ”

“ No, not attentive ; it was more like—like *devotion*, I think : he told me—O ! here is this silk ! did you ever see such a beauty ? ”

“ ’Tis very handsome indeed ! ”

“ And here’s a *love* of a sattin—feel it, how rich it is !—Ah ! here’s poor Arthur’s last letter ; poor fellow, how miserable he is ! ” (pondering over the letter in one hand, the sattin in the other.) “ If it had been *possible* for me, with *my* expectations, I *do* think, Eliza—O ! *that* is nothing ; only just rumped with my scrambling it into my ridicule when we came within sight of the custom-house.”

“ But what are you going to do with all this quantity of silk, Sophia ? ”

“ I don’t know ; you shall have some if you like.”

“ I should like it very much—I want to make a present to Louisa.”

“ To Louisa ! for the love of heaven, my dear creature, don't think of giving this beautiful sattin to that little piece of antiquity ! she will be just as well pleased with a bit of nankeen, or a Barcelona handkerchief.”

“ That I dare say she would, as far as the pleasure of the thing was concerned.”

“ O ! my dear love, how I did commiserate you when I received that deplorable letter about the charity children ! She is in the last stage of insanity beyond a question, I thought—the next thing I hear of her will be, that she is a professed Methodist, and walks over to Belton every Sunday and Thursday to sing at the Tabernacle—O ! by the bye, I have got the sweetest little French song for you ; you shall take it home with you, and learn it off by heart, and sing it to Waldegrave to-night—”

“ And tell him that *you* brought it over from France ! ” —

“ Do so ; it will introduce my name very cleverly. — Don't seem to know any thing about my meeting him at Versailles, ” — and this was followed by a vast many other injunctions — “ not to say any thing about *this*, ” — “ not to mention *that*, ” — “ not to let him suppose such and such things relative to Miss Brooke ; ” — to all of which Eliza returned strong assurances of prudence and discretion ; and the conference that had continued without interruption, save now and then from the entrance of her Ladyship, with some of *her* enchanting finery — “ a lovely turban ! ” or “ a heavenly cap ! ” — was at last broken up by the necessity of Eliza's returning home to dress for her visit.

“ Let me see you *immediately* after breakfast to-morrow ; — and be sure you look divine ; your hair should have been cut a little shorter — they don't wear it

so low in the neck in Paris ;—but you look quite lovely, nevertheless.”

“ My dear Sophia, you are determined to make a simpleton of me ;” and then, with the pleasing assurance from Lady Delville that “ it did not signify what she put on, she could not disguise herself,” she returned home to the duties of the toilette.

CHAP. VII.

ELIZA had many times in her life looked more winning, more endearing ; but never did her beauty more forcibly display its distinguishing characteristic of dignified, almost majestic loveliness, than when she walked into Sir George Melmoth's drawing-room.

An indistinct feeling of something approaching to humiliation, at being received as a guest in a house where she had so long resided with nearly the authority of a mistress, had given her an idea that, in making this visit, it would be necessary for her to maintain *all* her consequence. Her fine tall figure, more than usually erect, her Grecian expression of feature, grave, but marked with de-

cided sense and intelligence, combining in her whole appearance an object of the deepest interest and admiration ; it was thus that she first met the view of Mr. Waldegrave. The common introduction passed between them ; but she had scarcely observed him—other ideas had crowded upon her mind—a weight of indefinable sensation pressed upon a heart, that beat responsive to the slightest touch of feeling.

This was the spot in which her infancy, and all the happy, laughing hours of childhood had been passed. Just such an evening as this, two years since, she returned, for the last time, from school. She remembered the rich glow of the evening sun, what an appearance of happiness it imparted to every thing enlightened by its beams. The lawn before the house, how beautifully soft and green!—the foliage of the trees, how luxuriant!—the melody of the birds, how harmonious! Her heart, warm with

the ardour of youth, and swelling with the feelings, the extatic feelings, of new-found liberty, how did it expand with enthusiasm!—how did it throb with affection, beneath the fond embrace of that dear, doating relative!—Now, even now, she saw her—her book and spectacles thrown down—her arms extended—she herself bounding forward with the fleetness of a deer, to meet the loving welcome, and to wipe away those precious tears which age and tenderness sent trickling down the venerable face.

Scarcely could she restrain her emotion from being visible; but endeavouring to dissipate it with a heavy sigh, she sought to divert her attention from these painful reminiscences, by now, for the first time, fixing it on the stranger.

As he was engaged in conversation with Mr. Henley, she had opportunity to make her remarks without attracting his observation.

Whether it arose from her being slightly prejudiced against him, or that the report she had heard of him convinced her that Mr. Waldegrave *must* be, beyond redemption, the most egregious fop, or coxcomb, or dandy, or something equally ridiculous, that ever was known, she was certainly agreeably disappointed in the first impression that his appearance made. To her extreme astonishment, his neckcloth was tied in no uncommon manner. Apparently he did not indulge himself in the gratification of a sort of pasteboard pillory; and seemed to have retained a predilection for the power of using his head, by turning it in any direction that Nature designed. The whole of his dress was as far removed from any thing that could be thought coxcombical or affected, as could well be conceived. His whole deportment was, undoubtedly, that of the accomplished gentleman. There was a degree of gracefulness in

the attention with which he listened to Mr. Henley, who was talking with him at the window ; and in the slight, but courteous bend with which he replied to his remarks, that evinced the man of fashion ; not the fashion, as was before observed, of tying a neckcloth *à la mode*, but that air of good taste and good sense, which implies a thorough conviction of what is due to the feelings of every one. He was, certainly, a very handsome man ; though there was an appearance of gravity, or rather of *hauteur*, in the expression of his countenance, which indicated a perfect sense of superiority. He could not, certainly, be more than thirty years of age ; but still there was nothing about him that denoted a *young man*.

The gentlemen at length withdrew from the window, and, in the next moment, Mr. Waldegrave was seated by her side.

He seemed to observe her with peculiar attention ; but though he spoke occasionally on the common topics of the weather, the country, its beauty at this time of the year, and so on, he was, upon the whole, silent and reserved.

“ Sir George must have been strangely mistaken,” thought Eliza, “ when he spoke of his friend as incapable of talking to a woman in a common sort of way ; or, possibly, he has a mind to favour me, by adapting his conversation to what he supposes the depth and strength of my understanding.”

Sir George, with an anxious wish of returning the civilities he had received during his stay in the country, would willingly have crowded his table with guests, till it wore something the appearance of a city feast ; but Mrs. Bartley, who took upon herself to manage every body's concerns, and had a particular taste for putting young unmarried men in the right way, had given him (what

she called a *hint*, or, in other words,) a pretty plain direction whom he was to invite.

In addition to her own family and Mr. Henley's, she had caused him to invite Captain Sidney, his wife and daughter, resident in Belton, and who had been amongst the first to pay their respects to the Baronet on his arrival.

This worthy Captain, on making a good deal of prize-money, had retired to his native place with a very pretty fortune, which had every chance of reverting to his only child, Miss Maria ; who, with her mamma, being altogether as silly as heart could wish, walked very obediently in the path Mrs. Bartley had chalked out for her ; and gave her not the least reason to doubt but that she would cheerfully submit to her decisions in accepting the overtures of her son, Mr. William, whenever that gentleman should be graciously disposed to make them. The Captain either did not see,

or seeing, did not concern himself about his daughter's fate. In fact, he had never concerned himself much about her, or any thing else, except the grand desideratum of money. She had disappointed him very much in her first appearance upon this troublesome stage of existence. "Boys," he pertinently remarked, "might turn to some account, but girls were good for nothing but to spend money and talk nonsense;" the truth of which observation, it must be confessed, the fair Maria did most amply justify.

Mrs Bartley and her family were now announced, reinforced by the addition of her second daughter, Julia; a good humoured laughing girl, who had made an acquaintance with Sir George the week before at a cake-shop in Belton, which he chanced to enter just as she and her sister Kate were in the discussion of an immense gooseberry tart, or rather pie. The exclamation (in tones far exceeding a whisper) of "Kate, Kate!

that is Sir George ; I am sure it is—I am quite certain of it”—and the strong likeness to the rest of the family saved him all difficulty in discovering the names of the fair ones ; and, without further ceremony, eating with them, and laughing with them, and finally walking home with them, he made it his particular request, that “ if *all* the young ladies could not be included in the proposed visit to Fairfield Hall, at all events he might look forward to the pleasure of Miss Julia’s company.” To this request he was prompted out of pure compassion ; for in reply to his remarks of wonder, that “ he had not had the pleasure of seeing her before,” the poor nymph, with more truth than discretion, bewailed her hard fate, in being “ *so* shut up,” and “ *ma*” did promise her she should go to the last Belton ball ; and then she put it off again till next winter ; and she always did serve her so ; and she *never* would take her any where ; and she had quite as much right to go as Harriet ; so she

had ;" all of which lamentation, though it provoked a smile, excited with it a kind-hearted wish on Sir George's part of doing what he could to alleviate it ; and as Mrs. Bartley took heed to the *possible* as well as the *probable*, upon all occasions, though she did not put much faith in the power of poor Julia's plump, red, round-faced, laughing charms, she did not know why a serious impression might not be made even over a gooseberry tart ; and Julia, eating, looked nearly as well as Julia doing any thing else ; at any rate, the Baronet's invitation was to be accepted, and Julia exalted to a state of rapture, of which words would convey but a faint description.

As Mr. William did not appear, to make one in this family picture, Eliza entertained a faint hope that he might be otherwise disposed of ; but this expectation was soon destroyed by learning, from Mrs. Bartley's reply to Sir George's enquiry after him, that he was

“ coming presently with the Sidneys;” and in a few minutes he made his appearance, following the Captain and his lady, and twitching off Miss Maria’s tippet, which she continually replaced with a giggling laugh, and a “ dear me! Mr. William, how can you be so tiresome—la! dear me!”

Involuntarily Eliza smiled; and accidentally catching a glance from Mr. Waldegrave’s eye, she perceived that his countenance also wore a smile. Nothing could be more intelligible. “ Is it possible,” it said, “ that this silly creature can be of the same sex and species with you?”

From that moment a degree of interest seemed to spring up between them, and their conversation gradually lost its common-place topics. By the time they were seated together at dinner, they were perfectly well acquainted.

But though the attentions of Mr. Waldegrave every moment became more

marked, and Eliza began to think that she really *might* say with her friend Sophia, “ In my life I never saw a man so—so ”—yet was there not the slightest disposition to that particular pastime, for which, to the disgrace of our downright English, we have no appropriate signification, but the word *flirting*. He admired her certainly, for his eyes were continually turned upon her countenance, which, as somebody says, he seemed to *peruse* rather than to look upon. But it was an admiration that partook of no bowing, smiling, smirking grimace : it seemed to be that gentle respectful tribute to the powerful attractions of a lovely and elegant woman, which exalts, in a manner, him who pays it, as much as her by whom it is received.

In the course of conversation, Mr. Waldegrave, speaking of France, had occasion to mention Versailles ; and made enquiries after Miss Brooke : but

without any of that *tender* interest which *her* relation of the adventure would seem to have warranted.

At this Eliza was not much astonished; neither was she, on her dear friend's account, much distressed; for though she supposed it very probable that such a man as Mr. Waldegrave might occasion a sigh of longer duration than was usually given to the memory of dear Sophia's heroes, yet as the succession in her friend's list of favourites was rather rapid than otherwise, she imagined it not unlikely that Mr. Waldegrave might by this time be superseded; particularly as it appeared from certain mysterious hints she had dropt in the morning (which, on account of the discussion of the silks and sattins, she had only time to scatter in an unconnected form), that a charming Colonel she had met with in the packet-boat had twice picked up her parasol, and presented it to her with *such* an air, and in

reply to her telling him "that she was going to exchange the gaities of Paris for the *dullest* country village in the world," had begged of her, "instead of the *dullest* to say the *happiest*, since such *must* be the place in which she had fixed *her* residence."

"My friend Melmoth has been telling me," said Mr. Waldegrave, "the gratification I may look forward to this evening; if, at least, I can prevail upon you to favour me with some music." Eliza slightly bowed: "I was astonished," said she, "to perceive an instrument in Sir George's house, as he had acknowledged to me that music was not altogether his passion—at least not—"

"Not what you and I call music. But if it is not his, believe me when I assure you it is mine."

The transition from music to her sister's art of poetry was almost involuntary. The same ideas, the same taste, the same enthusiasm, appeared to animate

them both ; only that on his side it was tempered by time, by an intercourse with the world, and by a *slight* tone of listlessness, which, from living in the atmosphere of fashionable society, it was scarcely possible for him to avoid imbibing. It was at this moment, however, scarcely perceptible, so much did the novelty, the irresistible *naïveté*, the delicate justness of Eliza's remarks overwhelm all satiety, and interest him far more than a gentleman who, for ten years of his life, had annually made the tour of the West end circles of the town, could ever hope to have been interested again.

Eliza, on her side, was elevated somewhere above the third heaven. For the first time in her life she had met with a kindred soul. For the first time in her life, there seemed a chance of her being properly, rightly appreciated. Mr. Waldegrave might make love (as Sir George phrased it) to the ladies he encoun-

tered in St. James's or Grosvenor Square, but he made no love to her ; he appeared to be, in every respect, *all* she could conceive of the accomplished gentleman, For this day, she was fortunately delivered from the persecutions of young Bartley, who was playing off his agreeable qualifications for the advantage of Miss Maria Sidney ; and, by that happy inequality of taste, which saves us all from crying after the same bauble, he appeared to that young lady in a much more engaging light, than that " tall, proud looking man" (by which designation she inquired of him the name of Mr. Waldegrave), " whom Miss Rivers was talking and *flirting* with at such a rate." But though she escaped the son, she was exposed, without mercy, to the attacks of the mother : Mrs. Bartley having obligingly taken upon herself to grace the head of the table, near the top of which Eliza was placed, Mr. Waldegrave being the only intervening

person between her and the lady president.

The attentions which politeness rendered due to Mrs. Bartley, were strictly paid by Mr. Waldegrave; and in repeatedly turning to address her, he seemed sedulously to avoid that devoted attention to one object, which even his strong admiration of Eliza would scarcely have induced him to indulge, in defiance of those rules of perfect good-breeding which seemed to influence his most trifling actions.

Most women of Mrs. Bartley's age would have been more than satisfied with the notice she received from Mr. Waldegrave, particularly as the chair on his other side was occupied by a beautiful young woman, whose manners were as captivating and engaging as her person.

But Mrs. Bartley was somewhat exorbitant in her demands. She took very little heed of Mr. Henley's quaint and

dry remarks ; for *he* knew all that was to be known about her, and, she strongly suspected, did not honour her genius with any great warmth of adoration. But Mr. Waldegrave appeared to be a man whose astonishment it might be worth while to excite. Unwilling, therefore, to give him too much opportunity with Eliza, whose “ strange, harum-scarum observations might possibly occasion some *curiosity* on his side,” she perpetually interrupted him with,

“ May I trouble you for this?—Will you have the goodness to pass that?—Moore!—O, the delightful man!—that Paradise and Peri!—those lines—let me see;”—and then with a mangled quotation, enough to have driven the poet into Bedlam, if he had heard it, she would proceed to distribute the fruit set before her, and allowed Mr. Waldegrave a transient respite.

Finding at last that she could make no remark about “ Lalla Rookh,” or

"Childe Harold," or any hero or heroine, either in verse or prose, that Mr. Waldegrave did not appear to have heard before, though he bowed the most graceful assent to her truisms and common-place, she gave a summons to retire to the drawing-room much sooner than Eliza thought there was any occasion for. Indeed Miss Rivers had made a strange miscalculation of time; for, to her imagination, the dinner and dessert seemed both to have been dispatched in much less time than an hour.

Scarcely was the dining-room door closed upon them, when Julia Bartley, apparently labouring under the conception of some vast idea, which it was equally impossible for her to conceal or to express intelligibly, addressed the community at large with,

"Well, together! well!"

"Julia, Julia—I am shocked!" said Mrs. Bartley, with a most portentous frown—"Well!—together!! *together!!*"

I see I must leave you at home with nurse another time."

Not *much* discouraged by this check, Julia proceeded in a lower key : " But, mamma, I am sure you will be just as much pleased as any of us to hear what I have got to tell you."

" Well Julia, my dear, what have you got to tell ?" inquired Eliza."

" O ! something that Sir George has promised me."

" Julia, Julia," said her sister, " you know you asked him for it."

" Lord ! Harriet, that I am sure I did not."

" Did I not hear you say that it would be very pretty to go down the water, and dine in the Park, and come back again by moonlight?"

" Well, and suppose I did—you can't call *that* asking him."

" But the project is to take place this time twelvemonth, I suppose," said

Eliza, "as Sir George is going away the day after to-morrow."

"This time twelvemonth, indeed!" exclaimed Julia, with superlative contempt. "To-morrow—to-morrow morning, if you please!"

"To-morrow!" vociferated Miss Maria Sidney—"dear me! what *can* I wear—my pink striped sarsnet is too good for the water—and my cambric muslin pelisse is hardly dress enough."

"And it is quite impossible for Mrs. Thompson to make us up any thing," replied Mrs. Sidney, in a tone of deep concern.

"But what is all this rhodomontade about, child?" inquired Mrs. Bartley, moved into a little more toleration of Julia's extacies.

"Why, you know, mamma, I sat at the bottom of the table, and so I was next to Sir George, and I couldn't be so stupid as to sit and say nothing—and so I said, 'how pretty the water looks'—

and he said, 'so it does :—' how pretty it would be to go down the water,' said I;—'so it would,' says he.—'O, I should like it so much,' says I;—'Should you?' said he.—'well then we will make a party :—' What, for to-morrow?' said I;—'yes, to-morrow if you like,' said he—and then we settled it thus :—You are all of you to be here at twelve o'clock—not before, because the boats must be cleaned out, Sir George says, and the people spoken to, to come and row us; and then we are to go through the grounds, and up the river as far as the Dragon at Fenwick, and there we are to land and dine."

"Dine!" exclaimed Eliza, in a voice of horror; "dine at the Dragon at Fenwick!"

"Yes, why not! I am sure it is a very pretty place; and I dare say we shall have a very nice dinner, for Sir George said he would send over about it to-night :—'and we'll have gooseberry tarts,' said

he, ' for old acquaintance sake !' and 'twas very pretty of him. But you don't seem to enjoy the thoughts of it, Miss Rivers !"

" O, yes, extremely !" replied Eliza, unwilling to damp the ardour of Julia's transporting expectations ; but perfectly unable to reconcile the idea of the graceful, elegant Mr. Waldegrave, condemned to make himself agreeable at the Dragon at Fenwick.

" But what are we to do, Julia, when we have dined ?"

" To do ! why any thing ; just what you like—walk into Fenwick woods, and gather wild strawberries ; or play at bowls, or at billiards ; or—dear me—do any thing in the world."

" In short," observed Louisa Henley, " I suppose it is to be a day of rural felicity."

" Rural felicity !" said Eliza ; " Lord help us ! well, I dare say rural felicity has its charms."

"But you, on your part, would prefer some more *classical* entertainment," said Mrs. Bartley.

"No; I am not particular; I can accommodate my taste to any species of amusement, for I know that the *multitude* must have their various sports and recreations;" and having said this, she walked to the grand piano-forte (which, as a piece of furniture merely, had been sent down to the Hall by Sir George), and carelessly opening it, and as carelessly seating herself, she played some waltzes and country dances; less, it must be owned, for the gratification of her audience, than with a view to beguile the tedious, vapid interval, of Mr. Waldegrave's absence.

While she was amusing herself with her music, the rest of the party (with the exception of Louisa) were discussing with much eloquence the important question of their *costume* upon the approaching occasion; Miss Sidney

still vacillating with great indecision between the "pink striped sarsnet and the cambric muslin pelisse;" and Mrs. Sidney still mourning over the "impossibility of Mrs. Thompson's making any thing in so short a time."

Louisa Henley, with placid indifference to this high matter, had seated herself by the side of the piano; and, but that a quiet smile just lurked at the corner of her mouth, she might have been supposed to have attended to nothing but Eliza's music.

At length, Mrs. Bartley, remembering that the duties of her office had been dormant a short space, and that she had not been commanding or directing for nearly an hour, issued forth her orders for tea and coffee, and the gentlemen; a mandate that was almost immediately obeyed by Mr. Waldegrave.

CHAP. VIII.

ELIZA had left the instrument and had placed herself on a sofa near the door. Nothing could be more natural than for Mr. Waldegrave to take a seat on it ; he could scarcely avoid it, had it not been the very spot to which his inclinations pointed.

“ You are extremely obedient to my summons,” said Mrs. Bartley, claiming him as her own, as soon as he entered.

Mr. Waldegrave made some complimentary reply, and the entrance of the servants with the tea-trays, and, very soon after, the appearance of the rest of the gentlemen, relieved Eliza from the direful apprehension of having her companion’s novel and acute remarks again

interspersed with the namby-pamby of Mrs. Bartley.

Sir George Melmoth, however, now claimed his *right* to a few minutes' conversation with her. He had observed, not perhaps with perfect delight, the alliance that seemed to be formed between her and his friend ; but as he had told her the truth, when he said that he considered it a "*matter-of-course sort of thing*" for Waldegrave to make love to every woman he saw," it by no means excited any distinct feelings of jealousy ; particularly as, just before his arrival, he began to entertain some wandering notions, that "*if* he were to stay much longer, he did not know but what he *might* be foolish enough to fall seriously in love ; and as, in the natural state of his temperament, he had a great distaste to any thing *serious* in the way of love, and looked upon matrimony as that sort of winding up of a man's gaiety and pleasures, which, though it must eventu-

ally come, it is as well to put off to the last moment, he believed in his heart that it was *all for the best* that Waldegrave had stepped in between him and what might otherwise have been his fate. To talk nonsense with little Julia Bartley was an infinitely more safe amusement than to play the Philander with such a woman as Miss Rivers. Having, therefore, submitted to her approbation the plan which he and Julia had designed for the following day, he was about to resign her to his friend ; but Eliza, with a sudden thought, recollecting the weight of despair and dismay that would overwhelm Lady Delville and Miss Brooke if this water party were to proceed without them, attempted to call after him. Sir George, not hearing her, was proceeding to the end of the room, intercepted, however, in the middle of it by young Bartley, who greeted him with—

“ Well, Melmoth ; I like the plan of this frolic vastly. But how shall we arrange about dividing our party ? I should like—” Here Mr. Waldegrave interrupted them with Eliza’s summons to Sir George.

This was much too bright an opportunity for Mr. William to make himself important, to admit of his passing it by unimproved.

Accompanying Sir George and Mr. Waldegrave back to the sofa where Eliza was sitting, he no sooner caught the sound of her words “ I have a request to make to you,” than, with a species of practical wit peculiar to himself, he slipped in between her and the Baronet, who was standing before her, and placing himself, without any ceremony, by her side ;

“ A request to me ?” he said ; “ you do me too much honour ! you make me too *too* happy !”

Though the countenances, both of Mr. Waldegrave and Sir George, wore a smile at the ineffable pertness of this self-complacent youth, Eliza did not, *could* not, relax a muscle from the dignified calmness with which she seemed to wait the issue of his intrusion; and, supposing it concluded by the pause which ensued, she renewed her address to Sir George.

“ I was about to prefer a request to you in behalf of two friends of mine, Lady Delville and Miss Brooke; to both of whom you would long since have been introduced, had they been here on your first arrival.”

“ Lady Delville and Miss Brooke!” said young Bartley; “ beyond a question they must be of our party to-morrow; I wonder I did not think of it before. Shall I run down now, with your compliments, Melmoth, and say you will be happy to see them, and all that;” then

taking out his watch, "hang it, I don't think there's time, though."

"And if there were," said Sir George, "I would by no means consent to your having so much useless trouble, as my friend Waldegrave and I have already arranged to call upon the ladies to-morrow morning, purposely to request the honour of their company. Is there any other command you would honour me with?" addressing himself to Eliza. "Is there any other person, man, woman or child, that you have any wish should join our party?"

Eliza, thanking him for his unlimited consideration, declined availing herself of it, and the Baronet retired.

Not so Mr. William; he continued his reclining, *degagée* attitude, perfectly corresponding to the easy turn of his mind, till, to complete the measure of Eliza's misfortunes, fate, or something equally perverse, sent Miss Maria Sidney tripping past, ostensibly to "speak to

mamma," but, in reality, to put Mr. William in mind that he had not spoken to her for nearly a minute and a half.

Catching hold of her gown, and gathering himself up into as small a compass as he could, in order to make room for her on the sofa, he arrested her progress with,

"Whither so fast, fair Dian of the woods?"

"Dear me! what d'ye call me Dian for? you know my name is Maria."

"Diana, with the crescent on her brow!" and he pointed to a pearl ornament she wore in her hair.

"Oh, that is it! well I am sure I don't know what difference that makes."

"Don't you know that Diana—"

"La, dear me! what should I know about Diana," said Maria, rather anxious to escape from the subject, owing to a muddled recollection of having heard something about Diana, or Venus, or somebody or other, not exactly cal-

culated for the meridian of a drawing-room. Then turning to Eliza: "I hope Miss Rivers you will sing us a song, bye and bye."

"You are very polite to request it."

"Do you know 'Love among the Roses?'"

"I have heard it."

"Isn't it very pretty?"

"I dare say it is."

"I don't know which I like best, that, or 'Love has Eyes.'"

"Lovers' eyes!"

"La! now, Mr. William, you know very well what I said: Love—has—eyes; I have spelt it to you, over and over again. How can ye be so tiresome? isn't he very tiresome, Miss Rivers?"

"To me at all times, very; but I don't know that I should think so, if I were you."

Even Maria's obtuse faculties caught a glimmer of the latent sarcasm. "Nothing upon earth can equal the pride of *that* Miss Rivers," she observed to

young Bartley, as Eliza, having uttered her last observation, walked to the other end of the room to join Louisa Henley.

Immediately upon the arrival of Miss Sidney, Mr. Waldegrave had resigned his seat on the sofa, and had since been engaged in conversation with Sir George.

Eliza's *too* conscious vanity delighted to believe, that from the frequent glances they both cast upon her, she was the subject of their discourse.—How she wished that Mr. Waldegrave might be pleased with her!

But with all her vanity, and ignorance of the world, she was perfectly aware of the difficulty, almost the impossibility, of appearing with any charms of novelty to one who had been accustomed to all the variety of beauty and talent, and rank, and fortune, and accomplishment, in short, to the attraction of every kind and degree which the metropolis, and the metropolis only, can exhibit.

With more real diffidence in her own powers, than she had felt in her life before, and which had the happy effect of softening down the fine handsome woman, *commanding* admiration, into the lovely, modest, interesting girl, she suffered Mr. Waldegrave (who, with Sir George, now approached her for the purpose of requesting it), to lead her to the instrument.

As in providing himself with a grand piano, Sir George had done enough, and, as he would have conceived, when he came to pay for it, more than enough, to patronize St. Cecilia herself, and her divine art, he had not proceeded to the purchase of any stock of music, for the benefit of any unfortunate young lady who might hereafter wish to perform upon it, and could not "recollect any thing without her book." This difficulty had been foreseen, and obviated by the prudent forethought of Mrs. Bartley, who had desired her daughter Harriet to "look out some music,

to bring with them ; the value of which same music was more likely to be felt and understood by Mrs. Bartley's carriage horses, than by any one else ; consisting, as it did, of four immense *tomes*, bearing the name of " Miss Bartley," in gilt letters, on the outside, and in the inside nothing at all more promising or intelligent.

Sir George, with much humility, promising that he knew " nothing about the matter," alternately presented these massy volumes to Eliza's inspection. As he held the book, she carelessly glanced her eye over the index, and having rejected them all in turn, to the infinite, though suppressed, indignation of Mrs. Bartley, she observed that " she seldom played from notes ; and believed she should succeed better from memory."

Mr. Waldegrave seemed to be relieved by this declaration ; and, having arranged the lights to her wishes, and performed all the little offices of polite-

ness that usually precede a lady's musical performance, he took his seat at some little distance from her, but in a spot advantageous to the most perfect view of the beauty and expression of her countenance in singing.

A vague sort of fluttering, not from fear, not from diffidence, but from a consciousness that Mr. Waldegrave expected great things from her, and that she *must* fail—still agitated her too much to admit of her venturing immediately upon a song.

She played a sweet, plaintive air of Mozart's; and having at length tolerably well succeeded in the difficult task of abstracting herself *from herself*, and of entering heart and soul into all the beauties of the great master, she glided, as it were, into that enchanting air of "*Batti batti*," gathering, as she proceeded, new energy and eloquence, not from reviving assurance in her own powers, but solely from the soft, endear-

ing fascination of sentiment that pervades the whole of that exquisite melody.—She was no longer Eliza Rivers—She was Zerlina herself—Mozart's Zerlina, such as he must have imagined her in composing those notes of enticing, winning, persuasive tenderness. Even Sir George was pleased, though he scarcely knew why. Incapable, from his want of natural taste in these matters, to estimate properly the merits, either of the performer or the performance, he was nevertheless touched with that sort of feeling which the master-hand of genius alone can produce. “Few in the extreme, but all in the degree,” partake of this capability of being acted upon. It exists in the dullest temperaments—perhaps it is the spark of “the divinity that burns within us”—and which, sometimes kindling at the flash of genius, emits a transient flame, attesting for a moment the immortality of its origin.

Sir George, with less outrage of truth than is common upon such occasions, assured Eliza, when she had concluded her performance, that "he did not know how to thank her for it properly;" but Mr. Waldegrave, though he sprung forward to hand her to a seat, had stationed himself by her side for some moments before he spoke. At last, "I would borrow the words of my friend Sir George," said he, "if I did not believe that silence is sometimes the most expressive testimony of feeling."

"At all events," she replied, with a smile, "it is the safest course for those, who, like myself, have never any inclination to sacrifice truth to politeness."

"That is a sacrifice, I believe, which is never very likely to be made to *you*. But though you disclaim all *mere* compliment, I hope you do not disdain the tribute of sincerity."

"All tributes to a fair lady are to be received, I doubt, with some hesitation and distrust,"

“ Not all tributes, surely. You would distinguish between the man whose profession is *politesse*, and him whose expressions can never, he presumes to think, be influenced except by genuine feeling.’”

“ I am afraid that ladies in general are not casuists enough to determine so nice a point—particularly as—as—but no, I will not say it,” and she laughed ; “ it is betraying too much of the free-masonry of my sex.”

“ Do you think,”—and he looked at her with an arch and penetrating glance, “ do you think you can betray to me more of it than I know already ?”

“ I don’t know, indeed. I am afraid you are a very intelligent person upon that subject. But, at any rate, I will not be accessary to increasing your stock of information.”

“ And you will not tell me why it is difficult for ladies to distinguish between real and affected admiration ?”

"I believe, if you chose to do so, that you are much more able to tell me."

"I dare not give you so adventurous a proof of *my* sincerity. I dare not say, as you did, that 'ladies are not casuists enough to determine so nice a point ;' nor proceed to 'observe, as you were going to do, particularly—particularly'"—he paused, with a most searching smile.

"Yes, yes—go on ; you may say it."

"Particularly as admiration, of any kind, is too pleasing to them, to admit of their being at all solicitous about the quality or degree."

"Ah, you are a most formidable person !" and she shook her head at him.

"You are determined to make me afraid of you."

"No, pardon me, you reverse the order of things—I am the person to be afraid ; so much so, that I dare not hazard an observation that struck me

very forcibly in regard to your singing ; lest you should mistake the effusions of the heart for the mere jingle of politeness."

" If I did you an injustice of that kind, it would be from a supposition that a gentleman who is, of course, intimately acquainted with the merits of our best public performers, could not really find any music in a country village to merit his encomiums."

" It is exactly upon that point that my humble tribute of admiration would be justified. I am certainly acquainted intimately with the merits of our most popular singers. I will not alarm your good sense with so overstrained a compliment, as to say you excel those : but I may still with truth say, that I have never been more, or even so much, gratified, as I have been to-night "

Eliza made a slight inclination of her head, and he proceeded : " There is, indeed, a charm in private talent, which,

from the very nature of the thing, can never be imparted by any public exhibition. In the theatre or in the concert-room, we can never sufficiently abstract our minds from the performer. The performance may be, and, in many instances, is perfection. Science and taste are completely satisfied. But *sentiment* vanishes away before the idea that the whole is an exhibition."

"The continual habit of exhibiting must, of course, deaden, if not totally extinguish, the sensibility of any public performer," said Eliza.

"On which account it is," he replied, "that music, in a public room, loses one of its most powerful attractions; such as arises from the feelings of the singer being in perfect sympathy with those of the composer, and both combining to produce that effect upon the hearer, which this union of sentiment alone can produce. Herein it is, that, if I might be permitted, I would congratulate you upon complete success."

Eliza was not merely pleased—she was soothed—she was exalted by such praise as this. But, fortunately, to rescue her from any fear of being too happy, Mrs. Bartley here approached them, and telling Mr. Waldegrave ‘that she hoped his preference, perhaps, of vocal music, would not incapacitate him from finding some pleasure in the duet her two daughters were going to play,’ she compelled Eliza to follow her to the instrument, under pretence of wishing her to remark, “how well Harriet fingered—how decided was Julia’s touch!”

Eliza considered herself but poorly compensated for the loss of her agreeable companion, in hearing Martini’s Overture to Henry the Fourth *thumped* over by four red chubby hands, whose decision of touch indeed admitted of no doubt.

Mrs. Bartley, anticipating the probability of Eliza’s being called upon again,

reminded Sir George, just before the close of the Miss Bartleys' duet, that it would be proper to ask Miss Sidney to sing. "She has a very sweet voice, I assure you, Sir George; and if she had received the advantages of *some* young ladies, she would have been a most superior singer. I don't know any one here whose voice in point of quality is any thing equal to her's; and certainly not in compass; she can go with ease from the lower C to—".

Here a most outrageous flourish from the Miss Bartleys announced the finale of their performance; and Sir George forthwith went to seek Miss Sidney, for the purpose of bringing her up to the instrument.

The young lady, with all proper reluctance, resolutely declined the honour; though the request was seconded by the earnest intreaties of Mrs. Bartley, and the piano remonstrances of Mrs. Sidney.

"Maria, my love! do oblige Sir George; you can sing very prettily if

you like. Sing, ' Will you come to the Bower ?' "

" Ah, do!" said Mrs. Bartley: "nothing can be prettier."

" I don't think I can recollect it," slowly rising from her seat, and suffering herself at last to be led by Mr. William to the scene of action.

With a sort of prelude, possessing the singular advantage of having the bass in one key, the treble in another, she advanced a few bars in " Will you come to the Bower ;" and, except that she was out of tune about half a note, and her tone so tremulous and low, that but for an awful silence, in which a pin might have been heard to fall, no one would have known whether she were singing or whispering, she might be said to justify what Mrs. Bartley had said about her.

Not being able to advance far into " the bower," she looked round in an interesting manner, and said, " she could not remember it, and she was quite *sure*

she could not when she sat down." Hereupon Mrs. Sidney, and Mrs. Bartley, and Mr. William, recounted various ballads which she had been heard by all the parties at different times to warble forth. To each there was some objection; and nothing could be found even in the four great books which she could be prevailed upon to have any thing to do with.

"Well, d——n it, then sing 'God save the King,' if you can't sing any thing else," exclaimed Captain Sidney, who was sitting near, and not slightly provoked with the folly of his daughter.

"God save the King! la, papa, that is so *very* old."

"I think Rule Britannia would have rather the advantage in novelty," said Mr. Henley.

"I don't think I ever learnt 'Rule Britannia;' and, if I did, I am sure I could not recollect it."

“Heaven forbid you should!” thought Eliza.

Mr. Waldegrave was upon the point of stepping forward to say to Miss Sidney, “Suppose you appoint Miss Rivers your deputy upon this occasion,” when Mrs. Bartley closed the debate by saying, “Well, Maria, we must excuse you for to-night; and Julia, Harriet, William, come! sing the Canadian Boat song! after which, Sir George, I believe it will be time for us to be taking our leave. Mr. Bartley, I will trouble you to order the carriage.”

After some consultation about taking their parts, the Canadian Boat song was at length begun, and concluded, which it might as well have been without any consultation at all; as, long before the end of the business, the three parts were all mingled in one. The young ladies, with much unanimity, began after this fashion; but Mr. William, for some time, most manfully endeavoured to

make himself master of his own proper notes, and when they escaped him, chased them with enterprising valour through every division of the gamut. Finding the search at last hopeless, he was content to join his sisters; and in perfect unison, if not "sweetest harmony," they together closed their vocal exertions; at which, if the many did not "read the skies with loud applause," some two or three charitably disposed persons testified strong tokens of approbation.

Old Mr. Bartley, in a paroxysm of rapture, seized hold of Eliza's hand, and asked her "If it was not charming?"

"Row, brothers, row," with a practical illustration of waving himself backwards, "isn't that pretty, Miss Rivers? just for all the world like being in a boat. Well, well, I hope we shall all be in a boat this time to-morrow night, with the moon shining upon us! Ah! you young ladies like the moon! 'tis so

romantic! Well, well, there's a time for all things. Yes, yes; *bon soir, bon soir, adieu!*"

The general commotion of going, reminded Mr. Henley to summon his young ladies; and Sir George and Mr. Waldegrave both declaring that they should like a walk, accompanied them.

Sir George, conceiving, from the general turn of affairs during the day, that to his friend would of course appropriate himself the escort of Miss Rivers, offered his arm to Louisa, and walked off.

Mr. Henley having preceded them at the distance of several yards, humming what he could recollect of Miss Sidney's mutilated ballad, "Will you come to the Bower," and clearing a very narrow path for them by flourishing his stick, right and left, to the destruction of divers brambles and twigs that crossed it, Eliza found herself left to improve still further her acquaintance with the ele-

gant stranger, under the favourable circumstances of a bright summer moon, a natural concert of a host of nightingales, and *almost* a *tête-a-tête* walk ; for Louisa and Sir George gave them very little interruption, the latter only once addressing his friend, to inquire " how long it was since he had seen the moon, and whether he ever heard a nightingale before in his life?"

" Though not quite such a cockney as Melmoth would insinuate," said he to Eliza, without replying to Sir George, " it is long indeed since I have enjoyed the contemplation of such a sylvan scene as this, and under such happy circumstances."

The last words he added in a lower tone, and with a peculiar smile which the moon-light fully revealed to Eliza.

She was not aware that she returned it, till his continued gaze of pleased admiration awoke her consciousness. She

immediately withdrew her eyes, and spoke—to hide in speech, a sensation of indefinable embarrassment.

Her words were nothing but confusion and common-place, and, contrasted with the intelligence that enveloped her, they gave something of a decided meaning to the silent eloquence of her blush and her smile.

Rather a stranger to Nature and her genuine offspring, Mr. Waldegrave had indulged himself in the observance of Eliza's betrayed emotions longer, perhaps, than was quite consistent with his usually polite manners, till, recalled by her confusion, which visibly increased when she had made two or three trivial observations without receiving any reply, suddenly shaking off his impressions, he gracefully bent to attend to her remark: "I beg your pardon," said he, "you were saying something."

"Oh, nothing worth repeating; I was merely observing that I suppose our

country style of visiting has novelty to recommend it to you."

"It has that recommendation certainly; in fact I am almost a stranger to the shades, having passed the greater part of my life in London."

"The only place in the world," said Eliza with energy. He smiled:—"By such an unlimited eulogium, I must suppose you are very intimately acquainted with its merits."

"No, not at all; only conceiving it to be the grand emporium of taste and talent, I fancy it *must* be charming. In such a mart for excellence of every kind, people must move in a more enlarged sphere of action, and superiority is not insulted with being hustled and justled by paltry rivals, nor made the object of envy, as it infallibly is in the narrow circle of retirement."

"To a certain degree," he replied, "London is what you imagine; but I am afraid you mistake in supposing that

flourishing passion of envy wants sufficient scope there. The poet's remark may be taken, I believe, as proverbial :
 'Envy does merit as its shade pursue.'

It only happens in great cities to be modified by observation and knowledge of the world. If they be gifted with any discernment (and if not, the truth is soon forced upon them), candidates for notice *there* perceive how speedily the most splendid attractions of genius are forgotten, or absorbed in the novelty of something still more striking or astonishing. There, too, they are compelled to learn the exact balance of attention which society adjudges to merit, and acquire patience and politeness enough to yield the palm of celebrity to a kaleidoscope or a velocipede, or any other plaything that happens to be uppermost."

"You do not mean," said Eliza, laughing, "that this is a just sketch of the opinions of society, and that persons of distinguished genius are condemned

to divide popularity with every passing whim of the moment?"

"There are a few," said he, "to be sure, who are 'amongst the faithless, faithful found,' and who range themselves steadily on the side of real merit; but admiration is soon sated, and then people grow fastidious, and tired of wondering, and join the tasteless herd of common mortals, contented to swim with the stream and take what comes to them on the surface without trouble and without care."

"Then, probably, in defiance of all the fine things I have heard from you to-night, I am, at last, only one of the novelties which sometimes float on the surface of events, taken without trouble, and without care."

Eliza generally said what inclination prompted; and as it was just now her earnest desire that Mr. Waldegrave should be pleased with her, she was very willing to satisfy herself as far as she could upon

the subject. Without such a motive, she would not have overlooked the apparent vanity of resolving his general remarks into any individual application to herself.

“ Oh! surely Miss Rivers must have too just an idea of her own attractions to believe them likely to be classed with the *generalities* of which I was speaking,” he replied, “ or at all of a description to be taken without trouble, or without care. It might be well, perhaps, if they were.”

“ Considering how palpably I have been laying out for a compliment,” said Eliza, gaily, “ I don’t know that you could say less than that; but to exempt your politeness from any further demands upon it, we are fortunately arrived at the end of our walk.”

“ I assure you my politeness is extremely sorry for it, and myself too,” he replied, resigning her arm as they joined

the rest of the party, who were now arrived at the Rectory.

After expressing great hopes and expectations for the morrow, the two gentlemen departed.

CHAP. IX.



ELIZA was by no means unmindful of her promise of visiting Miss Brooke, "immediately after breakfast," on the following day. But on learning from Louisa that Mr. Henley was indisposed with some symptoms of approaching gout, which would prevent his joining the party on the water, and that she herself should decline leaving her father, she dispatched a note to Sophia, of four sides, to intimate to her and Lady Delville, the rapture that was about to befall them ; to give a slight sketch of the occurrences of the preceding day ; to pronounce Mr. Waldegrave one of the most fascinating of men ; and finally, to

say that she should be with them exactly a quarter before twelve, to accompany them to the Hall.

She was punctual to her time; and without much astonishment, as she had previously arranged in her own mind, that such a thing would be very likely, she found Mr. Waldegrave with the two ladies. Sir George was gone to give some necessary directions, and had left his friend to escort them to the place where they were to embark, and where they would be joined by the rest of the party.

“ Well, my dear !” “ Well, my love !” was the greeting of each kind lady, as Eliza walked into the parlour of “ Delville Fancy.” Mr. Waldegrave, with less enthusiasm, made her a graceful bow, “ hoped she had caught no cold the preceding evening,” and placed her a chair.

After some exclamations of rapture on the part of her Ladyship, relative to

water excursions in general, in which much mention was made of the moon, the Vale of Tempe, the banks of the Arno, Cicero's Tusculum, and the serpentine river in the Marquis of C——, 's park, Mr. Waldegrave ventured to suggest that it was time to set out.

“Come, aunt! I shall be *your* beau,” exclaimed Miss Brooke, doing as she would be done by, and ensuring to herself, as she supposed, the heartfelt gratitude of her friend; when, if she could have looked into her heart, she would have seen it ready to break with vexation, lest a manceuvre so little consonant with her nicely turned and delicate feelings should have been perceptible to Mr. Waldegrave.

If he did observe his fair companion's momentary embarrassment, he soon, however, dissipated it; and in the most general and easy conversation, appropriating himself in turn to all the ladies, helping Lady Delville over a puddle, and

three times offering his arm to Miss Brooke; once when she was overcome with a sudden faintness from the excessive heat; once when she hurt her foot "*most violently*" against a sharp stone, and once when she had to cross a rustic bridge of two or three planks, in doing which she was "sure her head would turn giddy, and she should infallibly be drowned;" he at last brought them to the appointed spot, where a general clamour of voices, amongst which young Bartley's was heard pre-eminent, calling out "Julia, Harriet, Miss Sidney, don't stir, don't attempt to get in till I tell you," announced the arrival of the rest of the party.

And now a most violent greeting took place amongst the ladies, to whom Lady Delville's long absence rendered her almost a stranger; after which the adjusting the ceremonial of their departure in the "two boats" Julia had spoken of, was a point to be considered. Sir

George declining to interfere upon this occasion, only begging of them "to make it quite agreeable to themselves," young Bartley, as a matter of course, took upon himself the office of Earl Marshal, by which arrangement Eliza found herself likely to receive the pleasant gratification of making one amongst the Bartleys and Sidneys, every individual of whom was more or less particularly disagreeable to her.

As however she was by no means of a temperament to submit to any thing that was not exactly to her fancy, she was upon the point of offering a decided negative to this measure, when Mr. Waldegrave saved her the trouble, by observing to Mr. William, that, "as he considered the ladies he had escorted as being put particularly under his protection by his friend Sir George, he could not think of being separated from them for the remainder of the day."

With the exception therefore of Julia, whom Mr. Waldegrave styled the "queen of the revels," the Bartleys and Sidneys were packed off in the largest boat, first; and by a little female manœuvring to delay the business of embarking as long as she could, Eliza hoped to give them sufficient time to make such an advance, that there might be no chance of seeing them again till they all met at dinner at the dreaded Dragon; a circumstance which without much difficulty she accomplished.

Some writer or other has observed that "nothing can be more uninteresting than a landscape in prose." Generally speaking, I profess myself of the same opinion; I shall therefore forbear to say any thing about sloping banks, brushwood, or stumps of trees. Julia Bartley had decided the business in two words, "'twas very pretty!" The scenery round them exactly answered to that description. The day, too, was clear and

calm, and "sent into the heart a summer feeling."

Lady Delville, who knew herself to be accounted "a most pleasant woman, with a vast flow of anecdote," was particularly garrulous in support of her character. Her recent travels had furnished her with a stock of adventure, which, upon a fair computation, would have lasted to the end of an East India voyage; especially as she had a most engaging way of amplifying trivial subjects, or what ill-natured people might have called, "a habit of saying a great deal about nothing." The *rencontre* at Versailles had been discussed before that morning; but, for the benefit of Sir George and Eliza, it was highly requisite to introduce it again.

Miss Brooke, with a most insinuating smile, "did not know what they *should* have done without the polite attentions of Mr. Waldegrave."

Mr. Waldegrave, for about the hundredth time, considered himself "most exceedingly fortunate,—the happiest of men, &c. &c."

"By what extraordinary circumstance was it, my dear Sophia," said Lady Delville, "do you remember, that we were bereft of all our *beaux*; was it Sir John's doing or Lord Sinclair's? They had made some irrevocable engagement; was that not the case?"

"If I remember right, it was the Marchioness who stole away our gentlemen."

"The Marchioness it was, I remember now, she came into my *boudoir*, in her sweet, fascinating manner;" (with a tone and gesture proportionately languishing and insidious). "Now my own dear Lady Delville," she began, "Yes, yes, Marchioness, I know what you are going to say.—'Do but hear me.'—'Not a word.'—'You *must* lend me Lord Sin-

clair for to-day :—‘ Cease, enchantress !—(a theatrical wave of the hand). ‘ I must be obliged, Lady Delville.’—‘ I *must* be submitted to.’—‘ Not by me, Marchioness !—(a tone of dignity)—not by me you very well know !’ It ended, however, as all disputes between me and the Marchioness always do, in my yielding to her caresses, what I had refused to her commands !”

Her Ladyship paused and looked extremely magnificent ; while poor Julia Bartley, who was the only one of her audience to whose fancy the very name of a lord or a marchioness had something in it particularly awful and impressive, was gazing with open mouth and breathless astonishment upon her as she proceeded in the above *tirade*.

To be sitting in this familiar manner with a person who had talked in such an easy chit chat style with a *real live* Marchioness, was an advancement in the scale of honour of which Julia little

dreamed, when she first set forth upon her excursion. She gradually, however, recovered her senses and recollection; more from her powers of mind being drawn to the observation of some beautiful French trimming on Miss Brooke's gown, than from her growing less sensible to the prodigious greatness that had so unexpectedly been "thrust upon her."

Miss Brooke in the meanwhile having, with much magnanimity, resigned Mr. Waldegrave to her friend, was endeavouring to recompense herself for this piece of disinterestedness by extracting what compliments and attention she could from Sir George. But as his homage did not flow in an easy, natural course of itself, she found this rather a task of difficulty to accomplish. While she sat still, and said little, she found he was likely to do the same. Indeed the Baronet's good-humoured countenance was particularly grave this morning;

whether it arose from some transient regret at leaving Fairfield so soon, or whether he did not find it quite the pleasantest thing in the world to see himself suddenly and entirely superseded in the good graces of a fair lady, who had not been absolutely marble to him, till the arrival of his friend, he was certainly rather abstracted, and unusually silent. It was only by dint of stratagem that Miss Brooke could make him say any thing agreeable. Having politely handed her into the boat, and seated himself between her and Julia, and prepared himself to listen with great contentment to all Lady Delville said, and might still have to say about Versailles, and Lord Sinclair, and the Marchioness, he was congratulating himself with inward delight upon the great comfort it was to a master of ceremonies to have two such women in his party as Lady Delville and Mrs. Bartley, in whose ineffable flow of language he saw himself at once relieved

from all expence of words or ideas, an expence of which, in some humours of mind, it is inconceivable how parsimonious people are.

But as all human good is generally balanced by a proportionate quantity of evil, Sir George soon found that, as an equipoise to the perfections of Lady Delville and Mrs. Bartley, he was also provided with the manifold whims and caprices of a young lady, who never could be satisfied that she was properly admired and attended to, while the luckless gentleman, who happened to be next her, was saying or doing nothing to flatter or serve her.

Divers therefore were the interruptions Miss Brooke gave to the Baronet's meditations. Sometimes, in consequence of a sudden movement in one of the men who were rowing them, the boat would incline a little to the right or the left.

" Oh, Sir George! Sir George! I am sure we shall be over. I am so alarm-

ed." Sir George, with the most solemn assurances, for a moment calmed her fears. Then, upon their returning more violently than ever, with a repetition of the cause of alarm, "I must get out—I must be rowed to the bank and get out! I am sure I shall faint, if I stay five minutes longer!"

These manœuvres succeeding no further than to make Sir George recoil from her as the quintessence of affectation, and turn with increased pleasure to the unaffected good humour of Julia Bartley, Miss Brooke considered it as well to forbear any more experiments in the way of fear and fainting, and applied herself to discover whether he understood any thing of the *agréments* of conversation. Here, however, she soon perceived his miserable deficiency of *sentiment*; at length abandoning him as hopeless, herself as shockingly unfortunate and ill treated, and the whole concern as the most stupid thing that ever

was known, she sunk into a reverie, in which she endeavoured to find consolation for her distresses, in calling to her remembrance all the pretty things the Colonel had said to her in the packet-boat; every expression of despair that poor Arthur's most despairing letters contained; calculating the exalted light in which her friendship must appear to Eliza Rivers, sacrificing (what to be sure never was her's to sacrifice, but that Eliza knew nothing about) for her pleasure and advancement the devoted attention of such a man as Mr. Waldegrave; wondering how Madame Lambris would make up the French suttin; *when* she should first put it on, and *how* she should look when it *was* on.

During this time Eliza and Mr. Waldegrave, placed by themselves at the other end of the boat, were not a little agreeable to each other.

The conversation, indeed, was principally on his side; and related to such

circumstances in his travels as he conceived would be most likely to amuse her. These he detailed with an animation chiefly borrowed from the growing interest which her varying countenance, her manner, her every look, so expressive of fixed and pleased attention, proclaimed her to be taking in him. Added to the loveliness of her person and the superiority of her mind, which even his short acquaintance with her enabled Mr. Waldegrave to decide upon her possessing, Eliza was now, with perfect unconsciousness, assailing him with a claim less arbitrary than any she had made to his admiration; but infinitely more insidious, more captivating, more dangerous. In stealing upon his vanity and self-love, she attacked him in a point where all men are in some degree vulnerable. He admired her the evening before: her beauty, her genius, her talents commanded his admiration; but it was in the soft engaging smile, so full of

soul—so full of meaning ; “ the sparkling glance that dwelt on him so kindly,” so intelligibly telling him how well she understood—how well she appreciated, how much she approved him, that she caused him often to pause, and in mental interrogation ask himself, “ what must be the love of such a creature as this ?”

At length their pleasures drew to a temporary close, and Eliza was recalled to terrestrial recollections, by Julia Bartley’s loudly exclaiming,

“ There they are ! there’s brother ! there’s Maria Sidney !—look, Sir George ; look, Miss Brooke !” And turning her head round, she perceived they were just passing under Fenwick bridge, at the corner of which, a neat white house, and a tremendous creature, enveloped in orange and scarlet-coloured flames, flourishing on a sign-post, announced them to be arrived at the Dragon Hotel.

The first raptures of their reunion with the rest of the party being past, and

manifold questions on all sides asked and answered, a sort of general doubt seemed to remain of what was to be done next. Sir George, extremely anxious that they should enjoy themselves to their heart's content, proposed a variety of proceedings, internally assuring himself that though a water-party might be the most agreeable thing in the world, if he were once fairly rid of the present one, he would never place himself at the head of another as long as he lived.

"Dear me! if *pa* and Mr. Bartley would but stand up, we might have such a nice dance; that is, if we had any body to play to us," said Miss Sidney.

"Dance!" the word operated like magic upon the faculties of young Bartley; "nothing could be so lucky! he knew some old man, or old woman, it did not matter which, a gipsey, who played upon the fiddle, and lived not more than three doors off; he would have her there in a minute," and seizing his hat, he was about

to fly down stairs, when Sir George, at the earnest request of Eliza, and moved by the convulsion of horror that seemed to agitate Miss Brooke at the idea of a fiddle and a gipsey, prevented him, by telling him, that "he believed it would not be altogether possible to arrange matters for a dance, in such a manner as would make it agreeable to all parties."

Mr. William did not exactly see why it could not be managed with infinite pleasure to every individual of them; but Miss Brooke continued to repeat, that "such a thing was never heard of; that the wealth of the Indies could not tempt her to put such an indignity upon herself, as to dance at a public house in broad day-light, to the fiddling of a strolling gipsey; it would be a pretty thing indeed for the Marchioness to hear!!"

"Oh, d—n the Marchioness!" exclaimed Captain Sidney; "if the boys and girls have a mind to amuse themselves, what the devil is it to her?"

Both Lady Delville and Miss Brooke exchanged looks of horror and contempt. To pronounce an anathema against a marchioness was a species of impiety, at which the devotion of their souls to that class of beings made them recoil with dread and dismay.

Julia Bartley now stepped forward to the relief of her ally Sir George, who stood in woeful despair, as not knowing what was to be done with the spirits he had conjured up to torment him.

"Dear brother, how can you be so stupid? as if there was nothing upon earth to be done except dancing. Go, get along with you and take a walk with Miss Sidney." Upon which with some energy she drove them out of the room, the young lady tittering and repeating "dear me, Julia! how can you be so silly!" the young gentleman proclaiming that "he must do as he was bid," and Captain Sidney bawling after them with the lungs of a boatswain: "to be sure and be back by dinner, for he would

not wait for them the twentieth part of a minute."

Then going up to her father, who was sitting in a window-seat, humming over a newspaper at least a week old, Julia laid her hand with some vehemence upon his shoulder, and told him, he might "just as well go and play a game at billiards with Captain Sidney, as sit there doing no good in the world."

The Captain accepted the proposal, and Mr. Bartley, giving up the paper, prepared himself to obey his daughter's commands, with a "Well, well, this is the way, Sidney—this is the way these women drive us about and make us submit; from the cradle to the grave, they make us do just as they like; well, well, its all right, its all right!"

Julia now called to Sir George, and as many of the rest of them as chose to follow her to the bowling-green; a summons which was obeyed most joyfully by the Baronet, who could almost have

worshipped her for her dexterity in relieving him from his difficulties.

Mr. Waldegrave, who was sitting between Miss Brooke and Eliza during the whole of these important debates, inquired their pleasure as to following Julia to the bowling-green.

Miss Brooke "detested all these vulgar sports and pastimes, but had no objection to a 'saunter' amongst the woods there," pointing from the window to a shady romantic looking dell not far from the house.

Lady Delville and Mrs. Bartley were engaged in deep discourse relative to some profound measures in household economy, in which the latter had lately engaged; and as her ladyship, though "*a ladyship*," was by no means inattentive to the minutiae of domestic arrangements, she was endeavouring silently and secretly to store her mind with such useful hints as might enable her, perhaps, with care and attention, and due magnanimity in disdaining

the sneers and laughs and hatred of her servants, to make a saving in her annual income of about five or six and twenty shillings a year.

The whole force and capability of Mrs. Sidney's mind had long been centered upon a worked flounce on Lady Delville's gown. She had now drawn Miss Bartley aside to consult with her upon the propriety or "possibility of asking her ladyship for the pattern of it."

This was much too bold a proceeding in Miss Bartley's opinion; but she thought by "observing it *well*, they might between them recollect it sufficiently to be able to draw it when they got home."

The "saunter" which Miss Brooke had prevailed upon herself to take with Eliza and Mr. Waldegrave, was not improperly so called. "The fatigue" she represented herself "to have undergone; the delicate state of her health, and the irritation of her nerves considerably

augmented by the vociferous mirth of Miss Julia Bartley, had reduced her to such a state of lassitude, that she really did not know how to move without support."

Mr. Waldegrave offered an arm to each lady.

"Thank you!—you are extremely kind—but that is a truth I have had an opportunity of learning before to-day; and you, on your part, have been unfortunate enough to know what it is to have to escort me when I am thus miserably oppressed with nervous feelings."

For the life and soul of him, Mr. Waldegrave could not call to mind any remembrance of such misfortunes. He had a general recollection of Miss Brooke, as an affected girl, whom he had met with at Versailles, and walked over the palace with; but as for her nerves and her indispositions, he neither knew nor desired to know any thing

about them. He made, however, a most polite bend, in assent to her observation, and assured her, " that his remembrance of the pleasure he had enjoyed at Versailles could only be obscured by recollecting that she was at that time suffering from indisposition."

Eliza quickly discovered that, to his other accomplishments, her new friend united a ready perception of the ridiculous in character, and an arch, malicious pleasure in slyly bringing it into full display. " Poor, dear Sophia!" she was compelled to acknowledge, laid herself peculiarly open to attacks of this kind; and though, in *her* estimation, she amply atoned for it by the warmth and tenderness of her feelings, and the real goodness of her heart, she could not forbear a passing smile, to see with what avidity she seized every flattering bait which Mr. Waldegrave held out to her, and how easy it was for him to amuse himself with her vanity.

Nor was she slightly gratified to contrast in her own mind the difference between his manner of addressing Miss Brooke and herself. The whole style of his conversation was different; and though it was now, beyond a question, every word of it true legitimate nonsense, it was so artfully mixed up with a tone of truth, and with an air of real meaning, that she considered her friend as entirely to be forgiven, if, (with her particular notions upon such subjects) she really *did* run away with a mistaken opinion as to the extent and depth of Mr. Waldegrave's admiration of her.

Though his conversation had wonderfully increased in volubility within the last quarter of an hour, he was almost silent towards Eliza; and but that he perpetually watched her with stolen glances, that seemed to imply a fear of losing something newly found to be dear and precious, he appeared to devote himself solely to Miss Brooke.

At this Eliza was by no means disturbed. She felt assured that her full value was, or at least ought to be, by this time understood by Mr. Waldegrave; and it was seldom or never that she exacted any sacrifice merely to her vanity. In fact, she was rather a proud, than a vain woman. She was not at all unhappy, not at all the less decided about her own merit, when she was not flattered; because she was still as conscious of that superiority which she justly conceived that she possessed. Flattery was pleasing to her, as a testimony that her claims to distinction were understood and allowed; but to Miss Brooke it was every thing. It was to her the only criterion by which she could judge whether she really did pass with the world for what she wished to pass; and whether she succeeded in her earnest endeavour to be considered as a proper object of esteem and admiration. Vanity, sometimes expanding into pride, was Miss

Brooke's prevailing passion ; pride, seldom condescending to become vanity, was Eliza's.

After wandering about the best part of an hour, Eliza suggested the admonition of Captain Sidney to the rest of the party, " not to be too late for dinner ;" and Mr. Waldegrave conceiving that he had made himself agreeable quite long enough for the advantage of Miss Brooke, opposed no entreaties to their proposal for returning to the inn.

CHAP. X.

THE dinner, which, according to Julia's prophecy, was "a very nice one," passed off amidst a variety of anecdote from Lady Delville relative to the specimens of cookery, and the different methods of eating and drinking she had observed in her travels, and a more than ordinary flow of wit on the part of Mr. William. Indeed, in every interval in which his mouth was not filled with meat, it was filled with merriment; and it was matter of astonishment to see how cleverly he managed to satisfy his appetite for the pleasures of applause, and of the table, at one and the same moment.

Irresistible as he was making himself for the public good, it is more than probable that Eliza might have thought the time rather tedious, had she not, as on the preceding day, been seated by Mr. Waldegrave; and though Mrs. Bartley (who again presided at the head of the table) was quite as much disposed to interrupt, and make herself disagreeable to them, his deep and increasing interest in Eliza rendered him less inclined to yield any thing more than necessary attention to another.

As soon as the ladies retired, Miss Brooke drew Eliza aside, and with a most emphatic pressure of her hand, “congratulated her upon her conquest;” at the same time asking her, “if she had said too much in his praise?”

“His manners are certainly most engaging; but what signifies that, Sophia?—he is going to-morrow (a sort of half sigh) and will never think any thing more of any of us!”

“ Oh! don't tell me; not think any thing more of you! I know better than that.”

“ Do you think, Sophia,” a little hesitation, “ do you think he is pleased with me?”

“ No, I don't think it, for I am *sure* of it. I was certain, from the first moment I saw him, that he was the very man to be charmed with Eliza Rivers. It was that idea that made me resign him wholly to you.”

Eliza did not attempt to thank her friend for the resignation, from the same sort of feeling which prevents a lady from expressing any gratitude to a silk-mercant, when he assures her that, for her benefit, he suffers her to have so many yards of silk to his own loss.

Lady Delville at this moment passing near them, Miss Brooke called to her to join them.

“ Well, aunt, what do you think of Eliza and Mr. Waldegrave?”

" I think that he is a very charming man, and she is a sweet lovely girl; and that they will make a most interesting and happy couple."

" Oh, Lady Delville, how you do delight in flattering me," said Eliza, smiling, but half angry with herself for being so much pleased.

" Flattering you ! do look at her aunt, and ask if any one *can* flatter her."

" Sophia, I will not be made so silly," half laughing, half confused. " Come, come along, and take a turn with me on the bowling green there."

They went forth arm in arm, Mr. Waldegrave still the subject of their discourse, with such occasional interludes about the Colonel, and now and then an encouraging assurance or two of the great probability of his being forthcoming in some shape or other, such as Eliza considered herself in gratitude obliged to throw in, for the comfort and pleasure of her friend.

In these inexhaustible topics nearly an hour had glided away, when Miss Brooke, recollecting that she had left her work-bag behind her, broke away for a few minutes, and went to fetch it.

Tired with lounging about, Eliza seated herself in a rustic sort of arbour, and in a listless, half melancholy kind of humour, was leaning her head upon her hand, when the approaching footsteps, as she supposed of her friend, roused her from her pensive attitude.

She half started on perceiving it was Mr. Waldegrave.

"Is solitude so engaging," said he, "that even for one day you cannot forego its charms?"

Eliza explained the absence of Miss Brooke.

"I am afraid I have interrupted you in some deep moralizing meditation, if I may judge from your attitude when I entered the arbour."

"No; it was merely that sort of reverie which Cowper describes, when

"The understanding takes repose

"In indolent vacuity of thought,

"And sleeps and is refresh'd."

"Do you admire Cowper?"

"I think I do. I am sure that I entirely respect him: and very often I am charmed with him. But, in general, I rather suppose that the dazzling magnificence of our more modern poets, leaves but little relish for the calm, didactic style of writing which prevailed in the last century."

"Most true. The public taste seems to be strangely vitiated, and to have entirely lost its healthy tone. In those literary compositions which appeal solely to the taste and feelings, there is now very commonly an overstrained effort to meet the reigning appetite for pungency and excitement, which, if it does not de-

generate into silliness, runs into absolute madness, which is even worse."

After a slight pause, which Eliza did not attempt to interrupt, he proceeded ;

"Nor is it merely in a taste for literature that this insatiable demand for stimulus exists. It pervades every thing. The first few years of our entrance into society passed away ; the beautiful gloss of novelty worn off, we know not how, or in what manner to fill up the 'craving void left aching in our breasts.' Hence a constant listlessness, a mind wishing to be roused from its torpid wretchedness, but whose morbid powers not all the charms of nature or art can restore to activity."

"Is it your own case you are delineating," and she smiled, "or is it merely the general one?"

"I speak generally. It is not for me, under the renovated feelings of enjoyment I owe to my acquaintance with

Miss Rivers, to speak of myself as incapable of being pleased ; unless, indeed, when I reflect how much the recollection of such talents and attractions will enhance the pang that awaits me to-morrow."

Not very unlike a pang was the sensation which fluttered at the heart of Eliza as he said this. His manner was too earnest, too impressive for her to reply to it as a mere compliment ; and, in truth, her state of feeling was too nearly bordering upon emotion to render it perfectly safe for her to speak at all.

She was not sorry to have her momentary embarrassment relieved by the approach of Miss Brooke ; and at the same instant the voice of Julia Bartley, audible from a great distance, loudly proclaiming, that " tea was ready, and *ma'* desired they would come directly, for it was getting dark, and she wished to set

off home," summoned them to the house.

With less conversation, but with a manner that implied an interest almost increasing into tenderness, Mr. Waldegrave attached himself wholly to Eliza for the remainder of the evening.

They returned home in the same order as they came ; and by some extraordinary good fortune, perhaps owing to the fatigue of having made themselves pleasant for a whole day, neither Lady Delville nor Julia Bartley had much inclination to disturb the silence which was preserved by the rest of the party.

Miss Brooke had composed herself to actual sleep ; and Sir George availed himself of the increasing twilight, to snatch every now and then a few minutes repose.

Placed again by her side, Mr. Waldegrave's whole soul seemed to be absorbed in Eliza. Seldom he spoke, but gazed

upon her with an earnestness that shewed him intent upon storing his memory with a fond and faithful recollection of her every feature—every look—every graceful attraction.

The intercourse of the day had given a character of intimacy to their acquaintance, which authorized a greater freedom of approach. It seemed not too familiar, that in speaking of his departure on the morrow, he should just lightly press the hand which laid so invitingly near him. But almost immediately relinquishing it, his soft, insinuating sigh too eloquently portrayed to the fancy of his fair companion that she should be remembered—that she should be regretted. A full tide of feeling pressed upon her heart, and affected her almost to tears. The scene around assisted to produce this effect. It was one of those evenings of calm beauty in which the mind particularly associates itself with external objects.

The stillness of the atmosphere, uninterrupted by a breath of wind—the soft, silvery gleams of a summer moon—the measured sound of the oars lightly splashing in the water—combined to swell the mournfulness that was stealing on her spirits.

Near to the spot they were then passing, stood Fairfield church. A stream of pensive, chastened light, rested upon the humble house of prayer. She could distinguish the pale, marble monument beneath which her unremembered parents—and her poor grandmother—all the ties—all the connexions that had ever loved her—slept in death. She dwelt upon all she had lost—she turned with trembling anticipation to all that yet remained. Strange associations of ideas—ill-defined forebodings, flitted before her mind. Through all of them prevailed that vague, but strong presentiment of evil, which in sending fancy to expatiate upon futurity, makes us

shrink, and shudder, and recoil at the shapeless, mysterious images she conjures up to harass and perplex us, and amid which, horrid as they are, the mind appears to be fascinated, and spell-bound—and almost to love to linger. No effort could shake from her these emotions. “I never shall be happy—I never shall be happy”—she mentally repeated—till tears—visible tears—fast falling down her cheeks, gave some relief to the fullness of her oppressive feelings.

Not with words—not with distressing importunity upon the subject of her uneasiness, was Eliza recalled to the recollection how intently she was observed by Mr. Waldegrave. It was again by the gentle pressure of her passive hand—it was again by the tremulous, the just audible sigh, that she was half pleasingly, half painfully restored to exertion and to self-command.

They were now within Sir George's

park, and their near approach to home roused all the party from silence. This circumstance assisted Eliza in regaining her composure ; and when Mr. Waldegrave, in handing her from the boat, said in a low expressive whisper, " Could I but hope sometimes to be present to your remembrance ?" she replied with some cheerfulness, " I shall always remember our acquaintance with pleasure." The Bartleys and Sidneys had desired their carriages to be in waiting at the place of landing, and as both Lady Delville and Miss Brooke complained of fatigue, they readily assented to the proposal of being set down by them.

Eliza preferred walking, and Sir George and Mr. Waldegrave accompanied her to the rectory ; after making a short stay to bid farewell to Mr. Henley and Louisa, they took their leave. Sir George, in parting, " hoped Eliza would keep her promise of riding out with him in *November*," with something of an arch

stress upon the word, which seemed to imply ; " my friend here will not be in the way to interrupt our pleasures."

She smiled, and told him, " she should prepare herself by practice to be a most accomplished horse-woman by the time of his return."

Mr. Waldegrave, including Eliza in the graceful general bow he made to the rest of the party, followed his friend, and was gone some minutes before she paid any attention to the question Louisa had twice asked her as to the " pleasure of the day."

Miss Henley's general indifference to intelligence of any kind, seemed, by a provoking perversity, to have changed this evening into an insatiable thirst after information.

Having satisfied her inquiries as briefly as possible, Eliza complained of fatigue, and retired to her room, in order to dwell without restraint upon the remembrance of the two last days. The

idea of Mr. Waldegrave was as yet principally pleasing ; the transient nature of her acquaintance with him precluded it from being mingled with much pain ; and though she lamented his departure with real regret, the sanguine nature of her feelings pointed to the certainty of their meeting again ; and to the conviction that nothing but time was wanting to bind them to each other in the strongest, the warmest attachment. The slight sketch of his character upon this point which she had received from Sir George, she considered as by no means applicable to her own case. It might be (and how did vanity and self-love luxuriate over the idea !) that Mr. Waldegrave had never yet seen the woman he could really prefer—till he met with her ! Whatever was the cause, she was satisfied that it was no feigned prepossession he appeared to have imbibed for her,—and let what would be the result of it, she assured herself that she would not

but have known him for all that the world could offer her.

It is thus that the female heart, with the philosophy of nineteen, persuades itself into attachment ; not yet discovering how soon the world—other habits and occupations—absence—change of scene, and natural inconstancy, obliterate in man the impression which a woman in those quiet pursuits that call for no thought, no exertion of mind, is nourishing and encouraging for the amusement of his vanity and her own disappointment.



CHAP. XI.

THE next morning was gloomy and dull, with a heavy determined rain. Mr. Henley's indisposition had so much increased, that he was not able to leave his room; and Louisa, more than usually taciturn, gave no promise of lending any assistance to lessen the depression, which, under these doleful circumstances, was fast stealing over Eliza.

After lounging upon the sofa for about an hour after breakfast, turning over the leaves of a novel, she at last threw it aside; and when she had walked up and down the room several times, she stopped about a minute before the glass, and arranged to greater advantage the dark ringlets that sported

on a forehead of snow, then turned away with an air that implied "it does not signify how I look to-day," and at length seated herself opposite to Louisa, at a small table, where the latter was employed at work.

"You seem quite in a restless humour this morning," and Louisa smiled.

"I am; I can settle to nothing. Do you never feel so?"

"Very seldom; I have not time for it."

"You are wonderfully happy. It is inconceivable to me what you do with your time."

"It can be no mystery to you. I should think, who are with me the greatest part of every day."

"When I am with you, you are invariably employed with your needle."

"Perhaps you do not call that employment?"

"It is no employment to the mind."

Louisa made no reply, and after a short pause Eliza proceeded.

“ I often wonder what you are doing the two hours you are up before me every morning; and the hour, at least, that I hear you moving about, after I am in bed every night.”

Louisa slightly coloured, and appeared at first not disposed to answer to this indirect sort of inquiry, but perceiving that Eliza expected her to speak :

“ I should imagine,” she said, “ that persons of any reflection, can be at no loss how to dispose of the first and last part of every day.”

Eliza here got up to look for her work; and having occupied herself with it about five minutes, she laid it down, looked into her book, and presently laid that down also. 192

“ I am sorry Sir George is gone, Louisa; he really was a very pleasant, good humoured young man; did he not improve with you on acquaintance?”

“ Yes, I think he did.”

“ And Mr. Waldegrave is a particularly pleasant man I think, don't you?”

“ His manners are very elegant, and I should imagine him clever.”

“ Sir George represented him to me. as a professed flirt ; I hate the word, I don't think it at all applicable to him.”

Louisa was silent. “ How uncompanionable she is !” thought Eliza.

After a short pause, “ Do you think, Louisa, that Mr. Waldegrave will be here again in November, with Sir George?”

“ I cannot possibly tell.”

“ He represented himself to me as particularly pleased with Fairfield and the neighbourhood.”

“ Then in all likelihood he will wish to visit it again.”

“ And yet I wonder he should ; for a man who meets with the society he does, can find nothing very engaging, one

would think, in a village and a provincial town."

" Indeed I should think not.—I imagine he must have spoken from a sentiment of politeness, rather than sincerity.

" It is not much in character with *your* principles, Louisa, to put the worst possible construction upon a person's motives."

" I am not aware that I do. A man may be perfectly polite, without being so insincere, as to render him the worse thought of for his gallantry."

" I should think much worse of Mr. Waldegrave than I do, if I thought him capable of saying what he did not mean, though in a matter of mere politeness."

" I don't think," and Louisa smiled, " that you are at all disposed to think ill of Mr. Waldegrave—I never remember to have seen you more pleased with any one."

" It would have seemed somewhat ungrateful in me to have been otherwise,

for though you in all probability did not observe so insignificant and, perhaps, as you may think it, so contemptible a circumstance, yet I believe I may, without vanity, tell you, that his attention to me was considered, by *other* persons, as carrying a distinction with it not unworthy of *some* little return of civility on my side."

"Undoubtedly; you quite mistake me if you think I meant the slightest reflection upon your manner to Mr. Waldegrave. He *was* very attentive to you; no one could avoid seeing it."

Eliza was a little softened; her heightened colour subsided, and the starting tear of irritated feeling gave place to a sort of half smile. But the impetuosity of ungoverned temper quickly returned as Louisa proceeded to say:

"But the attentions of such a man as Mr. Waldegrave are too much a thing of course, to occasion surprize to any one."

" In *your* idea, then, they are not worth any consideration ?"

" I should scarcely think them worth dwelling upon."

" Do you mean to insinuate that I do ?"

" Certainly not ; I have too high an opinion of your understanding."

Eliza had never received a compliment to her understanding with so little pleasure. She felt more and more persuaded that no two beings in the world could be more different than herself and Louisa. There was a something about her that she never could like ; she believed that, before many months were passed, she should endeavour to effect a change of residence, and put herself entirely under Lady Delville's protection : she and Sophia would be delighted to have her always with them, and then she *might* enjoy some interchange of confidence and affection. After Louisa's

last remark, she did not speak again for at least half an hour. Excessively out of humour, and consequently excessively miserable, Eliza passed the remainder of the morning in walking from one window to another, watching the weather, and hoping it would hold up, that she might be able to get down to Sophia, and obtain some comfort for her manifold disquietudes.

About an hour before dinner a gleam of sunshine broke forth. She hailed it with sensations bordering upon rapture; and, equipping herself in a moment for her walk, she just put her head in at the door, and told Louisa, "if she were not home to dinner, she should spend the remainder of the day with Miss Brooke;" and set forward with a velocity that bid defiance to puddles, and stiles, and every possible obstacle, and transported her to "Delville Fancy" in very little more than a quarter of an hour.

Her Ladyship was alone in the parlour.

“ Well, my sweet Eliza ! how d’ye do ; Sophia is quite impatient to see you to talk over our pleasant yesterday. Your’s more particularly, my love. Ah ! this is a different day to poor Mr. Waldegrave ! ”

Eliza smiled ; and inquired, “ if Sophia was very busy, or if she might venture up stairs to her ? ”

“ By all means ; she is just gone up to dress. ”

Eliza hastened to the apartment of her friend. The maid was instantly dismissed, and, after a most kind and cordial greeting, Miss Brooke inquired of her friend, “ Why she looked so grave ? ”

“ You that have so much cause for happiness, Eliza ? ”

“ Oh no, I have not, Sophia—I am so miserable. ”

“ My dear creature, what possesses you to say so—what is the matter ? ”

A variety of long suppressed emotions gave way at once to the voice of kindness, and, covering her face with her handkerchief, Eliza burst into tears.

To do Miss Brooke justice, she had an abundance of feeling; and Eliza Rivers in distress was not an object to be seen with indifference. Tenderly embracing her, she repeatedly asked her the cause of her uneasiness, before Eliza had sufficiently composed herself to reply.

At last, "I don't know, indeed, Sophia, what is the matter with me, but Louisa has been vapouring me to death."

"Vapouring, indeed! I can't think how you can support her at all. In the present state of your spirits, it must be death to you to live with such a lump of apathy."

"She certainly has no kind of sympathy or feeling about her."

"Sympathy! I should as soon expect sympathy out of this table. For

heaven's sake never think of making *her* a sharer in any of your feelings. I hope you have not spoken of Waldegrave to her."

"I merely mentioned his name, in the most general way possible. But she took an opportunity of letting me know that, though she had observed his attention to me, she considered it as a thing of course; a mere nothing at all—not worth a thought."

"I never should have thought of her impertinence! If any man had paid her the twentieth part of such attention, she would have lived upon the recollection of it for the next seven years. But it is better policy in her to despise these matters. If she always meets with civility, it is quite as much as she can expect; and more, too, than such a little old-fashioned thing deserves;—did ever mortal see such a quiz as it is?"

"She dresses shockingly, to be sure; but I don't really think her bad looking,

Sophia. She is very pale, and too grave for a *young* woman ; but, when she is animated, I have really seen her almost pretty."

" Yes, but when is she animated ? Never, but when she is talking to some old beggar woman, or looking after charity children, or some such stupid concern. And, by the way, my dear Eliza, pray let me caution you not to be drawn into any of those disagreeable ways. Though I laughed the other day about the charity school, yet I assure you I have thought very seriously about it ; and I must beg of you not to follow any of her nonsensical plans, and go shutting yourself up by the hour together, in a close room, with a parcel of unhealthy children, very likely at the hazard of a fever, or some dreadful complaint !!"

" I am afraid I have not much to accuse myself of in running a hazard of that kind ; for I very soon got tired of

the thing, as far as personal attendance was concerned. Any assistance in the way of contribution I am sure they are heartily welcome to ; but, as you say, Sophia, one's health really is liable to injury in giving up one's time to them."

"Oh, certainly. If you give them money, you give them every thing; and every one that knows you, Eliza, will do ample justice to your generosity on this point; so make yourself perfectly easy, and think only of being happy."

"I never was happy, yet, Sophia ; I sometimes think I never shall be."

"Oh yes, you will. You will be happy, with Waldegrave as your husband, before another year is past."

Eliza smiled, but shook her head.

"I am as firmly persuaded of it, as of my own existence."

"Ah, Sophia !"

"What should prevent it, if you really wish it yourself?"

“ Probably *his* want of inclination.”

“ *His* want of inclination ! You may well say that Louisa has been vapouring you,—you could have no doubt what his inclinations were last night ?”

“ I *thought* not.”

“ And why should you think differently now ? Because an envious woman, who has only seen you together *one* day, wishes to mortify you, and make you unhappy, with insinuating what she knows is too much of an untruth to be openly said.”

“ I cannot think so meanly of Louisa as to suspect her of this : I cannot indeed, Sophia. I do not like her, any more than you do, but it is because there is no similarity between us in our tastes and pursuits, not because I do not clearly see that she is perfectly amiable and respectable.”

“ I have not any doubt about her respectability ; stupid people are always respectable ; but every body will allow

that she is by no means a proper companion for you."

An idea for a moment flitted across Eliza's mind, that this remark was much more discreditable to her than to Louisa; but not choosing to dwell upon, or investigate it, she reverted to the fascinating topic of Mr. Waldegrave.

"And you really think, my dear Sophia, that I have not deceived myself, in supposing him to be particularly pleased with me?"

"Certainly not;" with an air of great solemnity.

The same inquiry and reply, modified only by a slight difference of expression, was repeated backwards and forwards, till Miss Brooke's maid, announcing that dinner was on the table, reminded Eliza to propose returning home.

This was of course opposed immediately by Miss Brooke, and, without much entreaty, Eliza was prevailed upon to be made as happy for the remainder

of the day, as profuse compliments from each lady (the aunt succeeding the niece, with still greater encomiums) could possibly make her.

It was not till she returned home, and found Louisa, in silence and solitude, reading in the parlour, that it occurred to her, that there might have been *some* pleasure in devoting her society and various powers of amusing to solace and cheer her during her father's illness. It might not be quite so pleasant as to talk of Mr. Waldegrave, and hear herself flattered ; but something in her heart assured her that it would have been much more amiable.

CHAP. XII.



IN the course of a few days, Mr. Henley's indisposition wore an appearance of danger, and Eliza's trivial sources of disquietude promptly gave way to the compassionate feelings which the sight of Louisa's distress excited.

Her really good and benevolent heart was profoundly touched, by the example of virtue which Miss Henley continually exhibited to her view, in the patience, the unwearying assiduity, the cheerful forbearance under every little caprice and fretfulness almost inseparable from his complaint, with which she attended her father during the whole of his illness.

During this period, Eliza confined herself to the Rectory, voluntarily sharing

with Louisa in any little, kind office in which she could be serviceable to the invalid. She absented herself entirely from "Delville Fancy," losing, in the contemplation of the serious scene that surrounded her, all interest in the trifling vanities which she was too well aware most commonly made up the tone of conversation with her friends there.

She felt too much real respect for Louisa's sorrows, to indulge any idle regrets of her own; and, far from giving any sighs to the memory of Mr. Waldegrave, she was astonished to find, at the end of a fortnight, how entirely every lively remembrance of him had faded away into the mere general recollection of his being a gentleman-like, pleasing man.

Mr. Henley was at length pronounced convalescent; but being still incapable of fulfilling the duties of his parish, with a probability of continuing so for some

time, Louisa, at his desire, wrote to his nephew, Mortimer Durand, a young clergyman recently ordained, to come and make him a visit of a few weeks, to undertake the care of his church. The young man being fortunately at that time in want of a curacy, readily acceded to his uncle's wishes; and a speedy reply to Louisa's invitation, announced his intention of being at the Rectory on the following Monday.

Mr. Henley was, on that day, sufficiently well to resume his seat at the dinner table; and, anxious to restore to his fair guest some gleams of her wonted gaiety, which he feared his indisposition had been the occasion of obscuring, he inquired of her, with a smile, "What is the cause of that grave look, Miss Rivers? Are you meditating an attack upon my nephew, Mortimer's heart? Is the fortress to be taken by sap, or stormed with a *coup de main*?"

"Nay, good Sir, I cannot possibly tell, till I have taken a survey of its strength."

"I believe it to be impregnable," said Louisa, with a faint smile.

"Describe him to me, my dear, that I may form some notion of what I am to expect."

"I don't know that I can. Mortimer is more easily known than described."

"Perhaps you can give me a negative idea of him. He is not a Dandy, I dare say?"

"Now, how dare you say any such thing," said Mr. Henley. "He may wear a neckcloth as stiff as parchment, and as good a pair of stays as you have in your possession, for any thing you know to the contrary."

"He may, to be sure, but I humbly trust he does not; for if there be any species of animal I hold in greater antipathy than another, it is that anomalous mixture of man and monkey, to which

naturalists, I suppose, have given the appellation of Dandy."

"He is not a Dandy," said Louisa, with more than usual gravity, "he is simply a young man of good sense and good morals."

"However, not to destroy his reputation at once," said Mr. Henley, "I will venture to pronounce in his behalf, that if you can, by any chance, get him to converse, Miss Rivers, you will find him to possess some taste and elegance of mind."

"Does he never talk, then, but by some fortunate chance?"

"He is naturally reserved," said Louisa, "and he has met with misfortunes; his health, too, is very delicate."

"Poor boy! he has been unfortunate, certainly," said Mr. Henley. "We thought it a great match for my sister Louisa, when she married his father, Mr. Durand, then in a flourishing business in London; and, if he had not

thought proper to retire and commence gentleman, it would have been a prosperous connexion. But, from the moment he gave up business he gave up happiness. His active mind, in quest of employment, made trial of a variety of speculations. He farmed, he gambled in the stocks, in which last amusement he frittered away three-fourths of the fortune he had realized in trade; with the remainder he joined in partnership with two needy knaves, and set up a provincial bank. These persons were to find the cleverness and activity necessary for the well conducting of the concern, and he was to be spared all trouble, provided he found money. With this foolish arrangement he was satisfied; and, fully persuaded that he ultimately should realize immense wealth, though nobody knew how, he went on for two or three years, always disappointed, till a very sudden death put a period to all his visionary schemes, and left my poor

sister a widow and the mother of seven portionless children."

"Poor Mortimer!" said Louisa, "how nobly he acted on the occasion!"

"He was then at College," continued Mr. Henley, "where he had nearly completed the usual routine of study, with such honour to himself as would without doubt have ensured him a fellowship. Knowing, however, the inability of his mother to support him any longer at the University, he relinquished all his own views, and, returning home, gave himself up entirely to the arrangement of his father's affairs, which were left in the most intricate and perplexed state in consequence of his dying intestate. They are now, owing to his skilful management, finally settled. The wreck of his father's fortune, which was indeed *but* a wreck, he has wholly given up to his mother and six sisters, purposing, now that he is ordained, to be no longer a burthen upon the family—"

"A burthen !" exclaimed Eliza, her eyes sparkling with enthusiasm—"an honour, an ornament, rather say."

"He is a very good young man," said Mr. Henley ; "I scarcely know one of whom I would venture to prophecy more favourably than of my nephew Mortimer. His merit has already engaged for him a warm friend in the Bishop of C——. But hark ! the gate bell rings ; here, probably, comes the hero of my tale."

"I will go and see," said Louisa ; and, with something of alacrity in her movements, she was about to proceed into the hall, when her progress was impeded by the entrance of a tall, elegant young man, who in the animated exclamation of "my dear Louisa," and the fraternal salute he imprinted on her cheek, announced himself to Eliza as the expected Mortimer.

After cordially greeting Mr. Henley, and inquiring with the earnestness of sincerity after his health, he turned to

Eliza, whom Mr. Henley slightly named in the common form of introduction, and silently made her a polite, but what, contrasted with the animation of his manner to his uncle and cousin, appeared rather a reserved bow. Eliza, prompt in obeying the suggestions of impulse, decided in a moment that he was the counterpart of Louisa, in stillness and quietude, and would, beyond a doubt, be a most respectable and worthy sort of dead weight upon their family circle, rather than an enlivener of it. This opinion received additional confirmation, as, the first emotions of meeting wearing off, he gradually sunk into a pensive kind of abstraction, which appeared perfectly constitutional to him.

It was only when the silver tones of his peculiarly harmonious voice struck her ear, that she now and then cast a glance upon his figure. In defiance of his silence, his reserve, and his dejection, it was a form which, once seen, dwelt

upon the remembrance of the beholder. It was slight, and distinguished by that sort of nameless grace which seems to emanate from the superiority of mind. "Mind, mind, alone," was indeed the characteristic of the whole appearance. The countenance, though pale in the extreme, had an expression of placid contentment upon it, which seemed to indicate, not the philosopher's contempt of suffering, but the Christian's acquiescence in its utility. It was altogether the countenance which Eloisa, in something of a chastened tone of feeling, might have contemplated, when she spoke of

"Those smiling eyes, attempering every ray,
"Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day."

"Those smiling eyes," so frequently encountered Eliza's whenever she chanced to look at him, that she was slightly puzzled to account for the inflexible silence which, during the greater

part of the evening, he preserved towards her.

“ He sees something extraordinary about me,” she said more than once to herself; “ but it is something that he does not like.”

Under this impression, she was about to retire to her room much sooner than her usual hour, but Louisa intercepting her, intreated for one song, strengthening her request by an assurance that her cousin Mortimer would be most particularly obliged to her, for that music was the only recreation in which he indulged himself.”

“ Does he perform ?”

“ He merely accompanies his voice on the piano.”

“ Oh, then we must hear him.—Mr. Durand,” and she turned to him, “ your cousin tells me you are a performer ; now, if you have any christian charity in you, do oblige me so far as to let me hear that instrument touched by some

other hand beside my own. You cannot possibly come out to greater advantage ; for I do assure you I am so entirely weary of hearing myself only,"—she paused a moment, as not knowing exactly how to finish her sentence—

But Durand, with an energy that surprised her, interrupted her, as with an arch smile he said, "Indeed, Miss Rivers, you compliment too highly ; I cannot conceive that mere satiety of your own powers should have rendered you so little fastidious, as to derive any pleasure from listening to so humble a performer as myself."

He blushed like a girl as he spoke, as if confused at the sound of his own voice ; and, relapsing immediately into his former silence, he politely, but steadily declined every proposal of Eliza's to draw him to the instrument.

"He is an odd sort of curiosity," thought Eliza, as she turned over the leaves of her music-book. "Is he metho-

distical, or merely of a marble temperament? I don't much think he is marble—no—he can't be marble with those eyes. He is, simply, then, one of the faithful, I suspect."

Whether as a test of his principles she should try him with an Irish melody or a sacred melody, she was at a loss to determine. Louisa, however, settled the difficulty, by earnestly entreating for "that sweet air she now and then played to please her."

"Do you mean that one of Mozart's which Gardiner has adapted in his sacred melodies?"

"It begins with, 'Lo! my Shepherd is divine.'"

"That is properly a duett," said Eliza; "and if Mr. Durand should happen to be very scientific, he will not enjoy hearing it in an imperfect manner; unless indeed he will relax a little from his inflexibility, and take the second with me."

He bowed, with a faint smile, which she knew not whether to take as an indication of compliance or otherwise. Tired, however, of making "much ado about nothing," she prepared to comply with Louisa's request, without preferring any more intreaties to him to join her.

She had proceeded but a little way in her performance, when she perceived him by her side, and immediately found herself accompanied in the most skilful manner by a voice of exquisite sweetness. There was a devotional expression in it, which evidently proceeded from the singer's heart. When they had concluded, Eliza with sincerity expressed her admiration of his taste and skill.

"You will be a most valuable person to me, I assure you," said she, "for I have an endless variety of Italian duets, which I have never had the heart to try, from the lack of some humane person to sing a second with me."

"I do not sing Italian," he replied.

She looked at him with a mingled expression of disappointment and horror.

"Probably you prefer psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs?" and she laughed.

"I have a great preference for devotional music undoubtedly."

"Oh, then I have found him out at last," thought Eliza—"a serious young man, of moral and unimpeachable character. I honour him prodigiously—but it is a great pity such a charming voice should be thrown away upon him."

Then, taking her candle from the side-board, she retired to her apartment; renouncing poor Durand as utterly hopeless, and more than once lamenting that he should be so musical, and yet so methodistical.

CHAP. XIII.

THE quiet reserved habits of Mortimer Durand assimilated extremely well with the regular proceedings of the family at the Rectory.

As he made no advance in intimacy with Eliza, she soon learnt to consider him merely as an appendage to their party, and not a particularly pleasant one, except when he was singing, which was very seldom, and never but when she insensibly drew him into it, by playing his favourite style of music.

But with all his dislike of her (for that he did dislike her most extremely, Eliza fully persuaded herself), there was some indefinable quality about him which

commanded her entire respect, and preserved him wholly from the shafts of that ridicule, with which in the first stage of their acquaintance she felt inclined to meet his immoveable gravity and reserve.

She believed that he did her justice too upon one very important point ; for, though possessing no more vanity on the score of personal charms than any very handsome woman must in reality possess, she was by no means displeased to observe how frequently she was the object of his earnest and fixed attention. That this was to be attributed to his admiration of her beauty, she could not doubt ; for his frigid silence whenever she hazarded any sally of sprightliness, and his apparent indifference to the general tone of her conversation, convinced her that her manners and deportment were not in exact conformity with his notions of female propriety.

With Mr. Henley and Louisa his behaviour was that of the most affectionate

son and brother. With the former he passed the greater part of his morning, but generally an hour before dinner he came to Louisa, and told her he was at her service for the remainder of the day. Frequently he accompanied her in her visits to her pensioners at the neighbouring cottages, and sometimes to her school.

Eliza had two or three times joined them in their walks; but as, upon such occasions, conversation had not much flow, she conceived herself to be a restraint upon them, and gradually resuming her intimacy with Miss Brooke, she left them pretty much to themselves.

In this manner three weeks passed away; at the end of which time Eliza was to have accompanied Lady Delville and Miss Brooke in a fortnight's excursion to a neighbouring watering-place. But the day before their journey she was so unwell with a severe cold, as to be con-

fined to her room, and her dear friends went without her.

Her indisposition had continued four days before she felt herself sufficiently well to leave her apartment. On descending, for the first time, to the dining-room, she found it occupied by Mortimer only. He was looking over the sermon he had just been delivering at church, for it was on a Sunday.

He rose on her entrance, and approaching her with more animation of manner than she had ever observed in him before, he expressed "his regret at the cause of her absence from the family, and hoped (with much earnestness of expression) that she had not ventured too soon to join them again."

"Oh, no, no! I am quite myself again; as, perhaps, to the disturbance of your serenity, you may too soon find. I can fancy that you and Louisa have been so quiet and calm without me, that, to use an Irish phrase, I think you

must have "gained a loss by my absence."

She fancied that he seemed hurt by this remark ; for though he said nothing, he coloured extremely.

"Have you been long returned from church?" she inquired.

"But a short time."

"Where is Louisa?"

"I left her there, hearing the children say their catechism."

"Ah, those poor children! their very name is a reproach to me!"

"Why so?"

"Because they were the occasion of my making many very excellent resolutions; every one of which, to my shame be it said, has gradually been infringed upon, and one by one they have been forgotten, till they are now totally laid aside."

"Accidental circumstances, perhaps, have interfered with the possibility of adhering to them?"

"Alas! I fear the failure is more attributable to constitutional instability."

"Impossible, Miss Rivers, that with your energy of character you should possess this feebleness of mind. You are doing yourself injustice."

"Indeed I am not; you cannot imagine a creature more infirm of purpose than I am."

"You must pardon my being a little incredulous," and he smiled.

"That of course is easily pardoned on such a point. If you knew me better, you would lament for me perhaps, that I am not all that (Heaven knows) I wish I was."

He seemed touched by her seriousness; placing himself on the sofa by her side, he gazed upon her with a countenance expressive of the most compassionate interest, while Eliza, not particularly observing him, thus went on:

"Now there is Louisa, I cannot but admire the steadiness with which she

constantly performs so many right things. No obstacles intervene between her and her purpose, for she pursues it with a perseverance which mocks all difficulty. But though I see her merits, and my heart does justice to them, it seems to me to require super-human strength of mind to keep so uniform a course of duty."

"And do not all our feeble efforts in the cause of virtue require super-human assistance?"

"Philosophers tell us—"

"Philosophers!" he exclaimed—
"Oh! Miss Rivers, cease to wonder that the path of duty is beset with impossibilities, if you have drawn your system of ethics from the doctrines of philosophy only."

"You deny it, then, to be of any assistance to us in our human trials and temptations?"

"Comparatively speaking, I believe it to be of none. At least I am persuaded—"

ed of this; that where philosophy has made one good or happy person, the divine precepts of the christian religion have made many thousands."

"The precepts of christianity form a beautiful code of morality," said Eliza; "I admire them extremely."

He looked at her as if he would penetrate her very thoughts; then, in a low impressive tone of voice, "Is it merely as a point of taste," said he, "that you have accustomed yourself to consider a subject of such immense importance to you? A subject, in comparison with which the advantages of this world are but dust and dross; for what is health or happiness, or even life itself when put in competition with your immortal welfare?"

The earnestness of his manner contrasted with his usual frigidity surprised her. She knew not exactly how to understand him; he was by no means the sort of person to take the liberty of re-

prehending another, merely for the pleasure of assuming an air of authority; she could only place it, therefore, to that earnestness for making converts, which is a distinguishing characteristic of the class of religionists to which she supposed that Mortimer in his heart belonged.

“ It is not at all as a point of taste,” she replied, “ that I have ever considered this important matter; but, in fact, I believe that few young persons are capable of considering it exactly in the proper point of view.”

“ Do not believe this, Miss Rivers; believe, rather, that all young persons who have been educated in the principles of the Christian religion, are capable of making it the rule of their actions; of looking up to it as a source of comfort in affliction, and of gratitude in prosperity; of living by it, and dying by it; believe all this to be practicable, for it most assuredly is so.”

“ Must I not believe, that, as a preliminary to all this, the love of this world must be entirely extirpated ?”

“ The love of its pomps and vanities must undoubtedly be subdued.”

“ I speak not of its pomps and vanities ; these I think I could easily bring myself to despise. You smile, Mr. Durand ; perhaps you think this facility of contempt arises principally from my being removed by situation and circumstances from the temptations of pomp and vanity.”

“ Why, I believe,” he replied, “ we all of us very readily fall into the error of supposing ourselves indifferent to what is beyond our reach. Mistaking the calm of hopelessness for magnanimity of sentiment, we may look down with perfect disdain upon such paltry things as wealth and honours.”

“ Most true !” said Eliza. “ But if the prospect of wealth or honours were to be opened upon us, and some glimpse

of our former flourishing notions should then dance before our minds, we should perhaps dismiss them with the answer of Felix to St. Paul, 'Go thy ways for this time ; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee.'"

"You are better read in human nature than I should have supposed possible," said he, " considering your years, and limited opportunities."

" Nature, I believe, has gifted me with a talent for observation ; and when that is the case, one has nothing to do but to walk into the first house one arrives at, and it is fifty to one but something turns up to give rise to reflection. But to return to our subject : Is it merely the pomps and vanities of life which you very good people feel yourselves called upon to renounce ?"

" I am not a very good person," said he gravely ; " I am simply a probationer, like yourself, in a world of woe,

looking forward, I trust, to one far happier."

"A world of woe! yes, that is the proper phraseology, I know; but there I think lies the mistake. It is not a world of woe; on the contrary, it is a very beautiful and attractive world. And when I gaze upon the fair creation that surrounds me, I would borrow the beautiful language of the poet, to describe what I feel:

"The meanest flow'ret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To me are opening Paradise."

"Am I to believe that these exquisite feelings are only bestowed upon me to be subdued, to be sacrificed by a painful effort to a cold, unlovely, repelling principle, guided by which, I am to become insensible to joy, or pleasure, or happiness, or comfort? Oh no! I can-

not believe it. These emanations of delight are given me to be enjoyed, not to be extirpated."

"Doubtless they were," he replied, "but their fruition is not in this world. They speak loudly of your immortal destiny; that destiny which is proclaimed in every vivid flash of intellect, in every burst of feeling; but, most of all, in that indefinable longing after happiness which can only be gratified in some future state of existence. This world we know and feel to be insufficient for such a purpose. This world! Miss Rivers;—Oh, 'tis unworthy of a heart like yours!"

The energy with which he spoke transformed him into a different creature. He seemed no longer the Mortimer Durand she had hitherto known him, pale as monumental marble, and almost as inanimate; but a being whose intelligent countenance, sparkling with enthusiasm, gave strong and decided in-

dication that want of ardour was by no means to be reckoned amongst his deficiencies. In the conclusion of his last address to her, his energy of manner had not confined itself to words, he had even ventured to take her hand; and not till a slight feeling of confusion was visible in Eliza's countenance, did he appear sensible that he was still retaining it. But immediately on observing this, he relinquished it with evident and painful embarrassment.

"Pardon me, Miss Rivers," said he, "the freedom of addressing you in this manner; but your enthusiasm prompted mine, and will, therefore, I hope, be kind enough to excuse it."

Then uttering some indistinct expressions about "his time being almost expired, and he believed Louisa would be expecting him at church," he rather hastily left the room.

The new development of his character which this short conversation dis-

played, created for him a sort of interest in Eliza's mind, which she unconsciously evinced by more frequent endeavours to draw him into discourse, and a more civil attention to him than she had hitherto shewn. Unusual, however, as was this conciliatory manner on her side, it produced no kind of change on his. For several days after their *tête-à-tête* in the dining room, he evidently avoided being left alone with her ; and in the family party, his usual taciturnity and reserve prevailed with increased force.

This inconsistency of behaviour, at the same time that it surprised, a little displeased Eliza, who was very little in the habit of having her efforts to make herself agreeable treated with any kind of indifference. For several evenings, therefore, after Mr. Henley had retired (which, since his illness, he had generally been in the habit of doing at an early hour), declining to comply with Louisa's request

for some music, she contrived to occupy herself so intently with her book, as scarcely to suffer the sound of her voice to be heard during the whole of the evening.

As it was by no means extraordinary for Eliza to be a *little* capricious, Louisa, quietly supposing that it was her pleasure to read, and to be silent, never gave her the least interruption; and Durand was generally furnished with an excuse for his absence by having a sermon to compose, or to read over, against the approaching Sunday.

It was not till the evening of another Sunday again came round, that Eliza, having turned over the pages of a volume of sermons, with very little attention to their contents, determined to vary her employment with a little music. Both Mortimer and Louisa were earnestly engaged in reading, and neither of them heard her move from her chair, till the noise she made in opening the

instrument attracted the attention of both of them. Immediately, Durand approached to her assistance, observing that "he was rejoiced to find she had not entirely renounced the intention of gratifying them again in that manner."

"If it is any gratification," she replied, "you have the satisfaction of knowing it to be always within your reach, at least, if you will *condescend* to ask for it."

"Condescend! Miss Rivers;—indeed—you are too severe."

He spoke this with such a tone of wounded feeling; that Eliza was vexed to think she had addressed him in so sarcastic a manner.

"Indeed," said she, "I find I shall never rightly understand you. Here for a week together, I find you flying me in every possible direction, and treating my *politesse* and pretty behaviour with downright indifference. Now, if I am to hear civil things from you but

once in seven days, you must not be surprised if I do not put the most absolute faith in their sincerity."

"I feel, indeed, that I am not rightly understood by you, Miss Rivers," he replied, "perhaps—I do not at this time exactly understand myself—but no matter."

As he spoke this, Louisa, who had advanced towards them, fixed upon him a look of the most earnest and sympathizing attention. Eliza remarked it, and for the first time an idea occurred to her that something of attachment subsisted between them. That Louisa should be in love, appeared certainly a kind of paradox; but that Mortimer with his strict and proper notions might very much love her and all her properties, appeared so likely a thing, that she wondered it had escaped her observation so long. She could now find a solution for all that abstraction of mind which had hitherto so much perplexed

her in him. Beyond all question his passion was little better than hopeless ; for though Louisa evidently entertained the most sisterly affection for him, Eliza felt persuaded that it was quite out of her nature to advance beyond that, and that the ardour with which she supposed it possible he might attach himself, was not, and, in fact, could not be returned in any proportionate degree on her side.

A kind of compassion was now added to the interest which his somewhat extraordinary character had already excited in her ; and observing him to lean his head upon his hand, with an air of dejection, she turned to him with less of gaiety than kindness in her manner :—

“ Come,” said she, “ I know I do not misunderstand you when I believe you to be fond of music ; I will sing you something quite to your taste, for it shall be Handel’s, and from the Messiah.”

She made choice of an air in which her captivating voice was heard to peculiar

advantage. Few were the songs she performed so well as that sublime air, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The strain of devotional pathos which breathes in every note of that divine composition, and the deep solemnity of the words always affected her very powerfully ; and except at those few intervals when reflection or mental uneasiness had raised her thoughts a little above the mortal level, or when, as in the present instance, she had a particular wish to please, she seldom or never made choice of this song.

With mute and breathless attention, Durand seemed almost to inhale every note she uttered. Sometimes the mellifluous sweetness of her voice floated in a sustained tone of the richest melody ; then at the close of the strain dying away in the most perfect shake, it left a pause really grateful to the fullness of the hearer's heart. Nothing could be more touching, yet more chastely sim-

ple than her performance. Louisa paid the gentle tribute of her admiration in silence and in tears ; she had retreated to an obscure corner of the room, in order to indulge them unobserved.

What eloquence did the countenance of Durand display, as it was bent upon Eliza !

“ Is it you,” it seemed to say, “ who would enchain to the grovelling joys of earth a heart so formed to expand to the sublimest emotions ? Is it you who bound your hopes of happiness to this world, when you are so capable of elevating the souls of others to the highest expectation of immortality ? ”

So completely did Eliza always identify herself with the sentiment that occupied her, let it be what it might, that when it was of a particularly affecting nature, it commonly overpowered her even to tears. Her recent indisposition, too, had considerably enfeebled her, and

rendered her more than usually sensitive. At the closing strain of her song, her voice became fainter—it faltered yet more; Durand hastened forward—he closed the book—he ventured to take her hand—he slightly pressed it.

Gently disengaging it, she walked to an open window which communicated with a viranda. She took two or three turns in it. The calm beauty of the summer moon, and the soft serenity of the air, in some degree soothed the strange agitation of her nerves. Her softened feelings, so prompt to vibrate at every touch, were now wrought upon by an object to which she could never be insensible.

It was curious, that twice within a few weeks, when a strange mysterious mournfulness pervaded her mind, her eye should rest as it did now upon the last lowly habitation of her departed friends. She was yet musing upon this coin-

cidence, when the voice of Louisa, softly pronouncing her name, roused her from her reverie.

"Louisa, my dear," said she, "come hither: do you see that monument?"

"My dear Eliza, why indulge unnecessarily in painful recollection? you are not used to be so much in love with melancholy."

"Twice, Louisa, very lately, has that monument met my view, and both times my mind has been unaccountably occupied with presages of unhappiness. Some misfortune threatens me—I am not born to be happy."

With every endearment of word and action, Louisa endeavoured to dissipate these vague fears.

"Come in, my love," said she, "and Mortimer will read to us; it will do you good to hear him read."

"Not to-night, dear Louisa. I must wait for the cheering influence of a

morning sun, before this load of oppression will leave me!"

On re-entering the room she perceived Durand apparently buried in profound thought, for his head was reclined upon his arms, which were crossed before him on the table. He started up at the sound of her voice as she wished him good night, but merely bent in reply to it.

CHAP. XIV.

MADAME de Sévigné observes, in one of her letters, that "at going to bed our thoughts are of a dark grey, but, in the middle of the night, they become black." Volumes of description could not have given a more forcible idea of the manner in which the mind is affected by the sombre images of night and darkness. But how beautifully equal are the dispensations of Nature! Day-light returns, and, cheered by its influence, the elastic spirits rebound from their temporary pressure, and dance again in the sunbeams of hope and expectation.

Quite restored to her usual state of animation, Eliza descended to the breakfast room. She found Louisa and Du-

rand standing at a window, engaged in very earnest conversation, which her entrance evidently interrupted.

A slight degree of confusion, visible on both sides, but particularly on Louisa's, left her very little doubt as to what had been the subject of their discourse; and she felt provoked to think she had given them any disturbance.

Mr. Henley, however, soon entered, and Louisa proceeded to make breakfast with so much of her usual placidity, that no one, but a very acute observer, would have detected any traces of agitation in her countenance. Eliza fancied that she could discover some marks of mental uneasiness about her. Durand was rather more than usually talkative; and, on Mr. Henley's asking Eliza if she had quite renounced riding on horse-back:—

“If you are disposed to renew that exercise, Miss Rivers,” said Mortimer, “and will condescend to accept of my

escort, I can only say you will confer a great deal of honour and a great deal of pleasure upon me."

"Really, Mortimer, you are getting quite a Philander," said Mr. Henley; "I shall have Mrs. Bartley here, in a few days, to inquire your character, and wishing to know if you want a situation. What think you, Miss Rivers?"

"To be sure Mrs. Bartley is a very keen speculator; but I think, all things considered, Mr. Durand will escape her."

"He is too poor to be sought after," said Mortimer, "and too ——" he paused.

"And too proud to seek, I suppose you mean to say," said Mr. Henley.

"Well, even pride and poverty have their advantages; and no trifling ones, if they preserve a man from a wife and a whole regiment of children, till he has something more to maintain them than a curacy of fifty pounds a year."

Mortimer assented, with a laugh, to the truth of his uncle's remark; and then turning to Eliza, he asked her "if he might look forward to the gratification of accompanying her in a ride that evening,—the morning, he supposed, would be too sultry."

Eliza had but two difficulties to overcome. One was the want of a horse; the other arose from a doubt how this arrangement might be agreeable to Louisa.

Louisa, however, herself, obviated these obstacles.

"You don't know what a pretty poney my cousin Mortimer's is," said she; "he will carry you very nicely. I often used to ride it when I was staying with my aunt last summer. I should like you to go out riding, Eliza, dear, for I think it would do you good. You have hardly yet recovered from the effects of your bad cold."

On hearing this, Eliza made no further scruple in accepting Mortimer's offer of riding with her. Indeed she imagined it not improbable that he sought her society as a means of varying his thoughts, and preventing them from dwelling upon what she supposed was an unprosperous attachment to his cousin.

In the evening, therefore, he accompanied her a pretty romantic ride, which took them to that Fenwick, renowned in Eliza's history, as the spot in which she had passed some pleasant hours, in the society of the only person who had, as yet, awakened any very decided interest in her heart.

The remembrance of Mr. Waldegrave, however, was, upon the whole, less painful than pleasing; and though she felt that she could have indulged it till it became melancholy, she, for once, struggled for a victory over feeling; and in detailing, for the amusement of her

companion, the motley circumstances that distinguished that eventful day, she succeeded effectually in banishing vain regret from her own mind, and, if she might judge from the animation her lively manner of reciting seemed to impart to Mortimer, equally so from his.

After riding in this manner for two or three evenings together, it seemed to follow as a thing of course; Louisa always proposing the business by inquiring of Eliza, soon after dinner, "at what time she would like to drink tea, whether before or after she had taken her ride?"

Eliza was willing to accept this as a tacit approval of the manner in which her cousin Mortimer disposed of his evenings. In fact, in proportion as his reserve towards her yielded to a greater degree of intimacy, she found in his conversation such a store of good sense and intelligent remark, such a propriety of feeling and judging upon all points, that

his society gradually became a resource to her, which she would have been rather disappointed to have been compelled to resign.

But though the terms they were now upon bordered more upon friendship than they had hitherto done, there still remained, on his side, an evident dread of approaching her too familiarly ; and which, in the first period of their acquaintance, she had construed into dislike of her ; but the marked pleasure with which he sought her society, rendered it impossible for her, with any justice, to retain this idea. Altogether, he was quite an enigma to her ; for why, with an attachment to another, he should so sedulously devote himself to her, she could not account, unless it was (as she indeed supposed) with a view to expelling the thoughts of that other from his mind.

That he was still attached to his cousin, she had very little doubt ; his

frequent abstraction, and the dejected manner in which he always spoke of himself and his prospects in life, confirmed her in this supposition. Louisa, too, had lately become more pensive than common, and but that it was an apparent pleasure to her to observe and promote his increased intimacy with Eliza; the latter would have sometimes entertained a suspicion that she was not quite so indifferent to his regard for her as she had at first supposed. The subject was of so delicate a nature, and one that so very little concerned Eliza, that she was often provoked with herself for feeling any curiosity to know how matters stood between them.

But though the recoil which he seemed to feel when her sprightly raillery was directed against his low spirits, always surprised and vexed her, and made her repeatedly promise herself that she never would jest with him on that subject again; her lively temperament generally

overtured her resolutions in his favour, and she never could prevail upon herself to forego any fair opportunity of glancing some witty insinuation as to her belief of the state of his heart.

She surprised him one morning in a kind of arbour, or summer-house, in the garden, writing, what a slight look sufficed to tell her was poetry. Whether he was transcribing from a book that lay before him, or whether he was composing, she could not tell ; but she chose to believe the latter, for, begging his pardon, and hoping her interruption would not prove of any material consequence to his muse, she hastily retreated; leaving him blushing, and bowing, and hiding the transcript between the leaves of the book.

She thought no more of this circumstance till the evening, when they were taking their ride, when observing him to be particularly absent and *distract*, she inquired, with some archness, "whe-

ther he was pursuing the poetical theme she had been so unfortunate as to interrupt in the morning?"

"If so," she continued, "pray do not let me be any restraint upon you. I will either canter, or gallop, or walk, or trot, exactly as may be most agreeable to the metre in which you indite. I perfectly understand these things I assure you, for I sometimes am in a sort of poetical mood myself."

"Are you?" he replied with a melancholy smile.

"Am I? Yes indeed am I;"—and she laughed. "And if I can be of the least use to you on this point, Mr. Mortimer, you may command me, or my Rhyning Dictionary, for I have one, and a very useful book it is, if one wants to write a sonnet in a hurry."

He literally seemed to writhe under this attack. Eliza was astonished, and half inclined to believe him capricious and ill-humoured, but that his coun-

tenance far more forcibly displayed anguish than resentment.

In compassion to him, she forbore to rally him further.

He seemed relieved by her consideration ; and on her making some indifferent remark upon the beauty of the evening, he readily fell into conversation with her, and appeared almost by a visible effort to discard from his mind its former oppression.

The evening was now declining very fast ; the sun had long been set, but the bright beams of an unclouded moon rendered the night so beautiful and inviting, that they lingered in their return home.

“ I often amuse myself,” said Eliza, “ when I look upon the moon, with thinking that she, too, is filled with beings like ourselves ; they, perhaps, are fighting for their crowns and sceptres, and stars and garters.”

“ If they are possessed with the same

feelings and passions as ourselves," he replied, "it is natural to suppose them occupied with the same pursuits."

"Seen under this point of view," said Eliza, "we ourselves appear but ridiculous creatures. With all our magnificent works of art; with all our stupendous projects; all our labour, and all our ambition, we are controlled by laws, of which we know nothing, but that they exist, and whirled along, presenting but a mere speck, an atom in the regions of space. We might reason upon our own insignificancy, after the manner of Hamlet, with Yorick's skull, till we do indeed resolve ourselves into the dust from which we sprung."

"'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so,' as Horatio says," replied Mortimer with a smile. "But in contrasting our feeble proceedings with the grand works of Nature, the moralist will undoubtedly find a lesson of humility. He will find that man alone is disorderly

and violent ; inconsistent and capricious. In the works of Nature, on the contrary, what uniform harmony ! Whilst we are convulsed with wars and factions, marking every where our track with blood and rapine, noise and tumult, Nature continues her course, silently, but beautifully exemplifying the wisdom and consistency of its Divine original—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

“ You are a moralist, I believe, Mr. Durand, at all times and upon all occasions.”

“ A feeble one, I fear. A frail instance, amongst many, of the much greater facility of arguing than acting.”

“ I can scarcely think it,” she replied ; “ I rather suspect you are doing yourself injustice, as you once were so obliging as to remark of me.”

“ I doubt *not*, at this particular time. There have been occasions when, through Divine assistance, I have been enabled to combat with inclination, even when it

has been innocent, but which in my circumstances I knew it would be dangerous to indulge."

"But if inclinations are innocent," said Eliza, "why should they be combated? Why should you embitter the most charming period of your existence with self-imposed austerities, as unnecessary as unavailing?"

"Ah, Miss Rivers! you have yet to learn what my past career has already taught me. May it be rather by observation than experience that you discover how many exquisite feelings and sentiments there are, which it will not be for our happiness to indulge. We cannot, perhaps, shut our hearts to them, but it were well to do so."

"Well! I cannot comprehend this self-tormenting doctrine," said Eliza; "neither am I anxious to understand it. I am content to be happy while I can, and to be miserable when there is a necessity for it."

“ We can all of us yield to necessity,” he replied. “ The difficulty is in making possibility subservient to reason,—in being able to say, I may but I will not.”

They were now crossing a sort of common or heath, and Eliza observing that it was a famous place to canter in, urged her little steed into a quicker pace, Durand keeping close up with her.

They had just entered a lane leading to the Rectory, and were within a hundred yards of the house, when the poney stumbled, and threw Eliza with some violence on the ground.

In an instant Durand sprung from his horse, and endeavoured to raise her in his arms. She was quite stunned by her fall, but retained sufficient recollection to hear the moans and anguish of Mortimer as he supported her. The fervor with which he clasped her hands, first one and then the other, the tone of despair in which he pronounced her name, calling upon her as “ Eliza, his

dear, his own Eliza, beseeching her to speak to him—but one word ;” seemed to float before her fancy rather as in a dream than in reality.

As she had fortunately received no other injury than the effect of the shock upon her nerves, in a few minutes she recovered her senses, and endeavoured to compose him by the most serious assurances of her safety, and that she was very well able to proceed home.

The sound of her voice was as a cordial to him.

“ Heaven be praised !” he exclaimed, seizing her hand, and ardently pressing it, first to his heart, then to his lips. “ Heaven be praised for this deliverance ! But hold, what are you thinking of ?” observing her preparing to re-mount the unfortunate poney, which he was holding by the bridle, “ not for the universe would I see you upon him again. Lean upon me, dear Miss Rivers—let me support you.”

Eliza accepted his offered arm ; and watching her as a mother would a darling infant, rescued from some imminent and impending danger, he conducted her home.

At the hall door they encountered Louisa, who, surprised at the lateness of their stay, was coming out to look for them. At the sight of Eliza, pale and agitated, and leaning her whole weight upon Durand, she inquired, with surprise and alarm, " what was the matter ? "

Eliza endeavoured to smile as she related what had befallen her, but her shattered feelings were no longer equal to support her, and, throwing herself into a chair, she gave way to an hysteric burst of tears.

Louisa flew to her assistance, while Mortimer, hastily mounting his horse, rode off to Belton for medical advice.

The flood of tears in which Eliza indulged was a seasonable relief to her exhausted spirits, and she was soon able

to smile in earnest, as she recounted to Louisa her recent adventure.

The first impression on Louisa, as she tenderly embraced and congratulated her on her safety, was that of devout thankfulness for her escape from danger.

In about twenty minutes Mortimer returned, bringing with him a surgeon, who, as a matter of course, strongly recommended Eliza to submit to be bled.

She protested for a long time against this measure, declaring there was no necessity for it ; but at length, in compliance with the intreaties of Mortimer, rather than for any satisfaction of her own, she submitted to it.

CHAP. XV.

It is curious, that we often receive images and impressions without any consciousness at the time of their presence, and when hours, days, and sometimes weeks have elapsed, we shall perceive them in all their primitive force and vivacity.

It was not till the next morning that Eliza distinctly remembered the impassioned manner of Mortimer, when she assured him that she had escaped from her accident unhurt. She might, to be sure, have been very seriously injured, or even have lost her life by this incident, but, in the calm and temperate state of his feelings towards her, she should even, in that case, have expected

him to express a more sober kind of grief, and not to have invoked her as *his* Eliza, as she now, with some astonishment, remembered his having done.

She could only account for it by supposing that the suddenness and hazard of the circumstance had surprised him into an enthusiasm which she had long believed to be naturally a feature in his character, but which his strange system of self-command had so disguised and concealed, that it was rarely, if ever, perceptible.

To her very great surprise, he was absent from the breakfast table; a circumstance very unusual with him, whose habits were domestic and regular, to a degree not often found in young men.

Mn. Henley, after having inquired with some anxiety of Eliza how she found herself this morning, told her that "Mortimer was so ashamed of his poney's misdemeanor, that he was gone to take him home."

"Home!" she replied, "why that is thirty miles off; is it not, Sir?"

"Somewhere thereabouts, I believe."

"Then he does not return to-night?"

"Not for two or three days, I believe," said Louisa.

Eliza was astonished. It scarcely appeared civil of him to go off without waiting to see her, particularly after her accident the evening before; and when Mr. Henley left them, she expressed as much to Louisa.

"I am very sure he meant any thing *but* incivility towards you," replied Louisa.

"I should not have been so much astonished if he had not expressed so much concern for me at the time of my accident."

"He *was* very much concerned. I never knew him to be more so at any circumstance."

“ When he first came,” said Eliza, rather thinking aloud, than addressing her companion, “ I know very well he disliked me ; but, latterly, I thought he had something of a regard for me.”

“ My dear Eliza, to what does all this tend ? Is it possible that you can be blind to —— ?” she stopt in some confusion, “ that you can entertain a doubt of Mortimer’s esteem for you ? Oh ! do not do him so much injustice, he does not deserve it of you ;” and saying this, she hastily quitted the room, leaving Eliza overwhelmed with a crowd of ideas, all so indistinct, that she could give neither shape nor meaning to any of them.

She was now so accustomed to Mortimer’s society, that his absence created a kind of blank in her feelings. The languor of indisposition, too, hung about her, and rendered her inactive and restless. After sauntering about the garden

for more than an hour, she turned into the summer-house, where Louisa had deposited a book-case, containing her few possessions in the way of literature.

By way of beguiling her weariness, Eliza took down a book. On opening it a paper fell from it, which, on perceiving to be poetry, she had very little hesitation in reading. It was written with a pencil, as follows :—

There is a grief which dares not speak,
 But drowns in tears the pallid cheek ;
 There is a woe that breaks the heart,
 But must not of its care impart.
 No fond-endeaving sympathy,
 Responsive tear, or mutual sigh,
 Can ease that bosom's thrilling pain,
 Which loves, —— but is not lov'd again!
 And mine, alas ! the bleeding breast,
 Where hopeless love is doom'd to rest ;
 But thine !—but thine, Eliza, dear !
 I dare not ask if love be there.
 While yet to muse on thee is mine,
 To gaze upon thy charms divine ;
 To listen to thy dulcet lay,
 Till earth's delusions pass away ;

And to my dreaming soul is given
 A foretaste of the joys of Heaven !
 The visionary bliss too bright,
 Too exquisite the fond delight,
 On one proud word to risk its fate
 And leave myself most desolate.
 One cruel word of cold disdain,
 To break the dear, the cherish'd chain,
 That binds me to a lover's pain !

With almost breathless astonishment
 Eliza pondered upon these lines. That
 they were addressed to her admitted of
 no doubt; it was almost as clear that
 they were written by Mortimer. By
 Mortimer ! whom she supposed to be
 attached to his cousin ! Was it possible,
 she asked herself, that she could have
 been so much mistaken upon this point ?
 She believed, upon reflection, that she
 might have decided, too precipitately as
 to the nature of his regard for Louisa.
 That he was unhappy, and unhappy
 from a misplaced attachment, she had
 indeed some grounds for supposing.
 But why she should have fixed it upon

Louisa she could not very satisfactorily account for; unless by supposing, as indeed she had done, that her excellent principles and many good qualities were very likely to attract and attach him to her.

But this unexpected disclosure removed the veil from her eyes, and presented her with a solution of all those parts of his behaviour which had hitherto so much perplexed her.

It would be difficult to say whether she felt herself most pained or pleased by this discovery; so equally were both sensations balanced against each other.

With the natural vanity of her sex, she was gratified by a conquest which the good sense and superior qualities of her captive rendered far from an ignoble one.

But the certainty that his habits of self-command would speedily impel him, if they had not already done so, to withdraw himself from her society, con-

siderably lessened her gratifications, and, in fact, gave her more concern than she could very well account for, persuaded as she was, that her sentiments for him were nothing more, and never could be any thing more, than those of the most perfect respect and esteem.

“ It was natural, however,” she thought, “ that she should regret the loss of him from the Rectory, even though she felt nothing for him but perfect respect and esteem.—He was so intelligent—really very clever—certainly a man of first-rate understanding—and he had taste, too—yes, when you could draw him out from his habits of austerity and reserve, he evidently possessed great delicacy and elegance of mind; not perhaps so much as Mr. Waldegrave,—ah, no! he was not like Mr. Waldegrave!—But then who was?—certainly not any body she knew.” She sighed, and thought no more of Mortimer for a full quarter of an hour.

CHAP. XVI.

BUT though the recollection of Mr. Waldegrave was still so fresh in Eliza's mind, as to render the idea of another distasteful to her, it was not so potent as to make her next meeting with Mortimer a subject of indifference to her.

Our self-love, too, often makes us unamiable ; but it has sometimes a contrary effect, and disposes us to be particularly agreeable and conciliatory. Perhaps this is never so entirely the case as when we know the favourable opinion that is entertained of us by those we are desirous to please, and know it too by means which testify beyond a doubt its fervor and sincerity.

Just sufficiently interested in the matter, to wish to preserve the impression

she had made upon Mortimer, Eliza received him on his return with smiles of pleasure. She extended her hand at the first sight of him, telling him at the same time, in her energetic style, that "she was rejoiced to see him back again."

"Rejoiced!" he repeated, with such a gratified smile, such a fervent pressure of her hand, and such an animated glance, that had she not already discovered the secret of his heart, these mute but eloquent signs must have betrayed it.

He then poured forth repeated inquiries after her health: "Had she *quite* recovered from her fall?—had she been taking care of herself?" with all that anxious sincerity which marks a genuine affection.

But these ebullitions of emotion were soon restrained. As if with a sudden recollection, he became grave and taciturn, and very soon after tea retired to Mr. Henley's study, where he remained for the rest of the evening.

Whatever were the motive for this conduct, it very much perplexed and disturbed Eliza. Sometimes she ascribed it to that inveterate habit of self-denial which appeared to regulate all his actions; and a person always influenced by so severe and repelling a principle could not be otherwise than very disagreeable. She was very much inclined, therefore, to find fault with him on that side; and still more so if, on the other hand, as she almost believed, the power of her attractions was not so great as she had imagined,—and he found it no task of difficulty to relinquish the opportunity he had of spending the evening with her, and to go very quietly, and happily, “and preferably too,” she mentally continued, “to write or to read some sermon for to-morrow.”

“Well, it did not signify to her—how silly it was to think about it!”—and she half smiled—and sat down to her work, and began to consider whether Mr. Wal-

degrave, in Mortimer's place, would act as he did.

In alternate ruminations upon Waldegrave and Mortimer, she passed the remainder of the evening, and great part of the night, for the subject still occupied her long after she sought her pillow.

On the following day she went to church. This she had generally been in the habit of doing on a Sunday, though as an act of propriety rather than of real devotion. Mr. Henley was a very good man, and gave them very good sermons.—In the opinion of the greater part of his congregation, they were excellent sermons.—and Eliza, when called upon for her opinion of their merits, gave it, without hesitation, in their favour; but it was with nearly the same feeling with which she would have assented to the truths of the multiplication table.

But since Mortimer had officiated for his uncle, the case was altered. She

now went to church, not only with feelings of less indifference, but with those of growing devotion. There was something in Mortimer, when engaged in his sacred function, that interested at once the heart and the understanding; especially of those who, like Eliza, knew that his life was one continued illustration of the doctrines he taught. There was such an earnest, impressive sincerity in his manner of performing the duties of his office, as made its way to the hearts of the most insensible, and compelled them to consider the merits of the cause that could awaken such genuine and fervent zeal. Till she heard him, Eliza could scarcely be said to have thought of that cause at all; but now it very frequently occupied her mind.

Like most persons of warm and enthusiastic imagination, she deeply felt the want of some more sublime and animating principle than this world, with all its fascinations, can inspire. But

she, who has said every thing that pertains to sentiment, better than any one else, she, who doubtless felt in her inmost soul the justice of her remark, Madame de Staël, has told us, that "Divine aid is entirely necessary, when our thoughts and sentiments are out of the circle of common life!—Distinguished minds stand particularly in need of supernatural protection."

Already yielding to the rising influence of religion, and, from recent circumstances, more than usually interested in Mortimer, Eliza was this day powerfully affected by the discourse he delivered, though it was upon a trite and exhausted subject. The sorrows and disappointments of life, indeed, are facts which require no argument to support them. It must have been on account of that strange prognosticating faculty of discerning misery in her future lot, and that promptness to assimilate with general remarks upon misfortune a particu-

lar description of her own individual fate, which so eminently characterized Eliza. It must have been on this account, or on some other, that the fact turned out to be, that on this occasion the words of the preacher were found to sink so deeply into her heart, as to affect her even to tears.

There was no art of rhetoric—no flourish of oratory—nothing in his style but the graces of simplicity and truth. Having spoken of the instability of life, —the mockery of its illusions, its unreal promises, and its vain delights, he thus went on:—

“Had we no other monition—had the voice of the Deity been silent, the immortal destiny of man would testify itself in his sufferings.

“Why do we suffer? why are our natural hopes frustrated, our best founded expectations deceived? Why should the mother, as she hangs over her infant, anticipating the lapse of time, and al-

ready beholding him, a youth—a man—in his turn her protector, and requiting those anxious cares which she now lavishes upon him; why should death, or, worse than death, filial ingratitude, disappoint hereafter these fond expectations?

“Why should the dreams of youth be only dreams? Why should disappointment so often blight the hope that Nature inspires? And why should Nature have given to us that beautiful faculty, which, like Noah’s dove, vainly searches for a resting place?”

“Is it not that the fond expecting heart, allowed to flutter for a time over the expanse of terrestrial joys, may, through disappointment and suffering, at last be prevailed upon to return to that ark of refuge, where alone it can repose in security?”

“The mere moralist believes that such may be the case. But the christian knows it. He who cannot deceive has

called to his compassionate arms the sorrowful and the unfortunate. 'Come unto me,' he says, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He too has told us that those who mourn are blessed, for they shall be comforted.

"Too surely, indeed, has he prophesied to us that in the world we shall have tribulation—but still we are to be of good cheer."

So persuasive, so eloquent were the melodious tones of Mortimer's voice, that it seemed to her indeed as if

"Truths divine came mended from that tongue."

Never had Eliza listened to him with such wrapt attention. Her eyes were rivetted upon him;—now suffused with tears at the sorrows he pourtrayed, and now animated with the immortal hope which his words inspired. He stood before her as a superior being; as the messenger of comfort to her from her

God; and her heart acknowledged for him a sentiment almost of reverence.

Her enthusiasm was too highly wrought to subside with its exciting cause. Silently she returned home from church with Louisa, and then immediately quitting her, she retired to her own room to think upon Mortimer. No idea of Mr. Waldgrave tempered the fervour with which her imagination represented his piety, his virtues, and his attachment to her. Her heart was, at this moment, elevated far above the idea of a mere fashionable man. For the first time since she had known of it, she considered the affection of Mortimer as really valuable and worthy of being encouraged. She really believed that she *could* be happy with him.

This belief almost amounted to conviction by the close of the day, for Mortimer relaxed his reserve so far as to pass the evening with her, to read to

her, to sing several of Handel's duetts with her, and he contrived continually to pay her those silent but irresistible attentions, which take the heart before it can be aware that it is in danger.

By the next morning, indeed, there was a slight abatement of enthusiasm in her sentiments. A volume of Madame du Deffand, with her clever sallies and brilliant turns of thought, had given another direction to her ideas.

She had been reading for some time alone in the parlour, for Louisa was gone out, when Mortimer entered the room ; upon which she laid aside her book, but with an expressive sigh which intimated that it was reluctantly relinquished.

" I beg I may not interrupt you," said he ; I merely came to seek Louisa ;" and he was about to retire, but Eliza requested him to stay.

" You are come very opportunely," said she, " to compel me to lay aside

book, which I never know how to put out of my hands when once I take it up."

"You excite my curiosity so powerfully," he replied, "that you must excuse my impertinence in wishing to satisfy it." And as she looked assent, he opened the volume.

"Madame du Deffand's letters!" He continued glancing at the title page. "Nay, then, I have no reluctance whatever to stay, if by doing so, I prevent the prosecution of studies like these."

He smiled as he spoke, but still he seemed in earnest in what he said.

"Well, I really believe myself," said Eliza, laughing, "that the book does me no good. But then it is so charming!—Those French people, with their memoirs, and their letters, and their *bon mots*, are altogether quite irresistible; we certainly have nothing at all like it, Mr. Durand."

"And long may we retain the proud distinction!" he replied, with energy. "It is true that we are deficient in that species of polite literature for which France is so eminent. We have not materials for it. Our straight-forward English sense, our honest matter-of-fact proceedings, the virtue of our women, and the integrity of our men, present insupportable difficulties to that art of graceful trifling which constitutes its principal charm."

"We are, to be sure, a most respectable, worthy, hum-drum sort of people," said she, with an arch smile.

"I will even admit that we should be so stigmatized," he replied, "if it be hum-drum, as you call it, to have a round of daily duties to perform, a home to retire to after they are performed; families and friends to love us, and to rejoice at our approach; hearts and hands for the services of others, and principle and

sense to guide us in the administration of our affairs,—domestic ties;—”

“ Oh, this is all extremely valuable,” interrupted Eliza; “ but wit has its charms, for all that.”

“ Unquestionably; but not when it is purchased at the expense of all that is dignified and praiseworthy.”

“ Surely you are too severe,” she replied; “ besides, I verily believe you are not speaking from your own conviction; you are taking up the opinion of some of those methodistical books you read; Bowdler, or Mrs. More, or some of those people,” and she laughed.

“ Some of those people you speak of,” he replied with gravity, “ are to be accounted amongst our national blessings. It is owing, perhaps, in no trifling degree, to the writings of Mrs. More (who, if considered as a christian, a woman, or a writer, is one of the highest ornaments of human nature), that we are what we are.” He paused a little while, but soon

went on with much earnestness: " My dear Miss Rivers, suffer me, as a friend, to caution you how you mention so venerated a name as that of Hannah More with the least appearance of ridicule. To one who knows you so well as I do, it is of little consequence, because the gaiety of your disposition accounts for many hasty sentiments, which I am sure can never proceed from either your head or your heart; but to those who were strangers to your merits, the slightest unguarded expression of any thing like contempt for such a woman as Mrs. More, would be liable to inspire an opinion of you very much in opposition to that which you ought to receive from every one."

Eliza coloured with momentary irritation at the frankness of this address. He instantly perceived it.

" I am afraid I am too unceremonious," said he; " indeed I know that I am."

"Oh! no, no, not in the least," said she, hastily interrupting him. "In five minutes I should see the justice of all you have said. In, fact I do now at this moment. I assure you I would not compromise my understanding so far as seriously to speak with disrespect of such a woman as Mrs. More."

"I am sure you would not," he replied, with a gratified smile, "I am very sure you would not." Oh! Miss Rivers, contrast her life with that of this brilliant Frenchwoman,—this accomplished Madame du Deffand. Contemplate them both as having reached that period of existence, when life has nothing more to offer; but when all its habits, and feelings, and pursuits are brought to a severe and final test; and, thus considered, which, think you, reflects upon her nation and her sex the highest honour?"

"But we must not thus rigidly consider poor Madame du Deffand. We

must make allowances for the times in which she lived—her infirmities—and her great misfortune of blindness, which threw her upon society for every resource of comfort and amusement. Surely her many pathetic descriptions of her wretched feelings ought to disarm severity, if they did not excite compassion. I can hardly read them without tears. I fell upon a few lines just now:—‘I am very unhappy,’ she says, to Horace Walpole. ‘I cannot describe to you my state, but in saying, that I feel the want of dying, as one feels the want of sleep.’”

“It always must be an affecting sight,” he replied, “to view old age destitute of all that can make it respectable or interesting. The complaints of this miserable woman excite pain; indeed, but with me it is a pain that borders upon horror, and which occasions any sensation rather than that of tenderness for the cause of it.”

“I am afraid you are a little”—she paused a moment ere she added, “a *little* hard-hearted,”

“I hope not,” he replied. “I cannot call it hard-hearted to have but little toleration for the murmurs of aged infidelity; for the impious repinings of a woman, who, in the course of a long-extended life, and in the exercise of a most uncommonly acute and vigorous understanding, never appears to have nurtured one religious feeling, or to have entertained an idea that there might be a Benevolent Governor of the universe. If her heart had not been occupied, as it most undoubtedly was, with passions the most rancorous and selfish, the very force and power of her own mind must have inspired her with momentary fits of enthusiasm,—it must occasionally have elevated her above the frivolous and vicious people with whom she associated, and compelled her

sometimes to imagine that she was created for nobler purposes."

"And what are all these murmurs and complaints that displease you so much," said Eliza, "but the aspirings of a superior mind, conscious and ashamed of its grovelling pursuits, and only lamenting to be so fettered and enchained by them?"

"I call them rather the overflowings of intense selfishness," he replied. "I remember a passage in one of her letters, written, we must observe, at the close of more than fourscore years of existence, during which it is but reasonable to infer she must have been the subject of many signal interferences of Providence, certainly in the case of being herself spared to repentance, when many of her associates in iniquity were suddenly snatched away, this wretched infidel thus expresses herself:—'I am always indignant at the injustice of making us

to be born without our consent,—and of making us grow old in spite of ourselves. A fine present is life when accompanied with such sufferings !”

“ You select from the very worst side of the question,” said Eliza, “ is there nothing to be said for the frankness, the artlessness of her character, and the warmth and sincerity of her friendship for the accomplished person to whom these letters were addressed ?”

“ I admit that she was natural in her feelings,” he replied, “ her abhorrence of affectation is one of her principal merits,—and her regard for Walpole I believe was sincere ; though, if she had any self-respectability to preserve, she would hardly have expressed it to him in terms of such preposterous warmth as to call for his repeated reproof. Of the general steadiness of her friendship we have ample cause to doubt. Excepting Walpole, she seems to have loved no

one, but to have kept up her connexions from motives of self-interest, and to save herself from the horrors of solitude and reflection. Of her utter heartlessness, there is a most illustrious specimen in her notice of the death of Voltaire; a man whose splendid talents, one would suppose, ought to have made him sufficiently interesting to inspire her with something like a moral reflection,—something approaching to a tributary sigh to his memory. Instead of which, her mention of the departure of this extraordinary person, with whom she lived in habits of intimacy and correspondence, is, if I remember right, tagged to the end of one of her letters to Walpole, as a thing that had almost escaped her memory; and after being introduced with '*I forgot to tell you,*' the mere literal fact is told in a few words, and there is an end of it."

Eliza, a little puzzled to know what to oppose to his remarks, could only

smile, and repeat, "that he was too severe,—and I hope you will think so yourself," she continued, "when I assure you that, to me, the principal attraction of these letters lies in the great similarity of feeling, upon many occasions, which I discover between this unfortunate woman and myself."

"Yourself!" he repeated in a voice of horror—"My dear Miss Rivers, what can have misled you to form such a notion? Are *you* repining, selfish, and an infidel?"

"An infidel, I bless God I am not; nor, I hope, ever can be; but often devoured with *ennui*, oppressed with the burden of existence, distasteful to myself and to others, I too certainly am. And shall I be the person to judge with severity an unhappy creature, in whose vapourish and desponding feelings I trace but too much resemblance to my own?"

"It is nothing but an imaginary resemblance," he replied; "I could not endure to believe it real. Believe me, Miss Rivers, I should very impatiently have suffered any other person to point it out to me."

Eliza smiled, as the only method of avoiding to see the deep and earnest interest which his words, and still more his manner, implied that he felt for her.

Conscious, however, that his eyes were fixed upon her, she became a little embarrassed, particularly as she could think of nothing to say to interrupt the silence he maintained.

At last she rose, and was going to make an excuse for leaving him, but he detained her by suddenly, though with the utmost respect, taking her hand:

"I wish I might presume to advise," said he. "I wish I had influence enough with you to prevail upon you to relinquish this dangerous reading; or, if not, will you permit me to place in your hands,

as an antidote to these volumes, a correspondence, less brilliant indeed, but far more valuable, in all that is really valuable. If you will wait one minute I will fetch the books."

He soon returned, bringing with him the letters of Mrs. Carter and Miss Talbot; which, on her saying that she had never read, he begged of her to peruse.

"I warn you," said he, "beforehand, that you must not expect to find in them those flashes of wit, those delicate strokes of satire, and all that matchless grace, with which the French, and the French only, know how to adorn every thing; but you will meet with plain English sense,—virtuous, and not trite or common sentiments; and many useful, if not profound observations upon life. You may contrast, if you please, the pious hope of immortality, which, after an existence of virtue, gave to the death-bed of one of these ladies a sort of joy

not to be described, with the comfortless despondency of Madame du Defand. You may ——” but seeing Louisa enter the room, he checked what he was going to say, and only added, “but I leave it to your own good sense to make what application, or draw what inferences you please, from the contents of these volumes,” and then, rather hastily, he withdrew.

Some emotion or other flushed Louisa’s usually pallid countenance, as she entered the room. But, soon subsiding, without any inquiry as to what had passed, or what was the meaning of the four volumes Mortimer had just put into the hands of Eliza, she quietly alluded to some family concerns of a trivial nature, and finished by asking Eliza “if she would like to take a walk?”

CHAP. XVII.

ELIZA read with much attention the letters that Mortimer had recommended to her perusal. At first she entered upon her employment with no great interest in it, and rather as a compliment to him, than an occupation from which she proposed to herself much pleasure.

Her mind, pampered with the high seasoned delicacies of French literature, had very little relish for the plain fare of wholesome, substantial sentiment.

But intrinsic merit will make its way, and triumph over prejudice itself; provided, indeed, that prejudice has not taken root in a weak or superficial mind, for then, no effort to eradicate it can reasonably be expected to succeed.

She had read but a little way when she found herself pleased—then by some sensible observation called upon to reflect—and not unfrequently, by some pencilled remark of Mortimer's, drawn to compare her taste with his; and, as it appeared that they generally coincided in their opinion, the perusal of these volumes, at the same time that they made her better acquainted with his general sentiments, inspired her with that regard for him which a sympathy of taste might be expected to produce.

Already prepossessed in his favour by knowing herself the object of his affection, though highly approving the sense of the text, she found more interest in the annotations in the margin. Many of them were particularly expressive of his habits of thinking, and especially of that approbation of self-control which his whole conduct indicated that he felt.

“*Beautiful and very just!*” his pencil had decided the following paragraph

to be, and Eliza's sighing heart testified acquiescence with his remark.

“ Surely there is more need of moderating and regulating, than heightening these dispositions which are so liable to run wild! Partial fondness, misplaced trust, vain hopes, bitter disappointments, endless anxieties, comfortless sorrows, sometimes resentment towards others, sometimes utter despondency in ourselves, pretty surely follow these unhappy errors. Let the highest affection be fixed above this world, and every other will rise in just proportion, and the harmony of life be complete.”

Sometimes her vanity suggested that some idea of herself had prompted his observation. Once, indeed, she had no doubt of it, for having read—

“ To centre all our joys and hopes, all our fears and anxieties, in any human object, so as to make the happiness of our lives to depend solely or chiefly upon that ; to raise our affec-

tions to their utmost height ; to add to them all the heightenings of imagination, and to fix all this in a fairy world of our own,—this is surely to put one's self in a state of mind very unsuitable to the orders of Providence, the nature of this world, and its short-lived inhabitants."—She perceived that he had remarked upon it,—“ *It is unquestionably as sinful as imprudent, but alas !* ”—

Nothing less than a strong but misplaced attachment could have inspired him with this sort of assent to the sentiment. And whom did he love but herself?—Reason suggested that he might have been attached before she knew him :—but it was not likely ;—and, besides, the remark must have been made lately, for she remembered to have heard him say, he had read the books for the first time since he came to the Rectory.

It was of *her*, then, that he thought, when that expressive “ *alas !* ” fell from

his pencil ;—and she laid down the book to ruminate upon him.

“ Surely,” she asked herself, “ surely I could be happy with Mortimer?—A man of sense—and taste—a man of principle and understanding—a religious man—a man so entirely qualified by nature, and education, and habit, to be a friend and counsellor to me,—who have none—and who so often stand in need of both ;”—and she sighed :—then, after a few minutes’ pause,—“ I really think I could be happy with him !”—She repeated—“ I really think if he were to propose to me, I should accept him.”

It was the first time she had advanced any thing like so far in his favour ; but having done so, she even went a step further, and began to consider whether Mortimer had it in his power to think of marriage ; and to calculate upon his views and prospects.

He was certainly not, by any means, what is commonly called “ a good

match;" nor was there, in the prospect of a connection with him, a reasonable hope of gratifying any *penchant* for "pomp and circumstance," which she might entertain. But this was not Eliza's weak side. Yet, although she did not covet the vanities of life, she had sense enough to desire such a share of its advantages, as would enable her at all times to live in an easy, and even elegant manner.

"This," she thought, "might be the case, were she to marry Mortimer. He had not, it was true, any thing in possession; but he had learning, and fame at his University, he had evidently great talents. He had a warm friend, and an able patron in the Bishop of C——. It was impossible to have better interest than he had."

Thus led on from thought to thought, Eliza was surprized to find, when roused from her reverie, the lengths she had gone in his behalf.

"But it is really very idle to think so much about him," said she, starting from her chair; "I dare say his self-command will soon enable him to forget me, and there is an end of the matter."

It happened about this time that Mortimer received a letter from the Bishop, appointing him his chaplain; a piece of intelligence which he communicated to the family party as they were one morning assembled at breakfast.

When congratulations had been given and received, Mr. Henley inquired of Mortimer, "if he had no idea of marrying, upon the strength of his new dignity? To be preferred and married, you know," said he, "is, generally speaking, one and the same thing with a young clergyman."

"I believe, Sir, I must wait for some more solid preferment before I venture to encourage any hopes of marrying," replied he.

He spoke so decidedly, so much as if he had never entertained a serious thought upon the subject, that Eliza internally smiled at the useless solicitude she had given herself about accepting him. Whatever were his sentiments for her, she felt persuaded, from his manner, that he had not the most distant idea of their leading him to make her a serious proposal.

Under this conviction, she soon resumed the gaiety which was usual to her, though some feeling, not quite so strong as disappointment but nearly allied to it, made it something of an effort to appear in high spirits.

But her pride was more wounded than her heart, if indeed there was any wound in the case, which was doubtful.

Determined not to appear in the least sorry to part with him, she heard him speak of setting off that morning to visit his mother without any diminution of cheerfulness, but, if possible, with in-

creased animation. She even urged his going, when, evidently reluctant to do so, he walked from window to window, and thought it would rain, and believed he should put it off a few days, and would write to his mother instead.

"Surely it would be more kind to go and tell her in person of what has befallen you," said she; "and, moreover these little absences of your's have their advantage, Mr. Mortimer. They make you a sort of novelty to us, when you come back. People are apt to get rather tired of one another when they live together for ever."

She spoke this in joke, but it seemed to be any thing but a joke to him to whom it was addressed.

He said nothing, however; but by gravely making her a slight bow, implied that he acquiesced in her remark, and very soon left the room.

Eliza saw she had given him pain, and would very gladly, if possible, have

recalled her ill-timed jest ; but it was her case never to understand the effects of her follies till after they were committed.

She scarcely thought he would take her advice, and go ; and certainly she did not wish that he should ; for whether she liked him sufficiently well to marry him, or not, it was perfectly clear to her that she preferred his society to that of any one else around her.

More than an hour elapsed after breakfast, and neither seeing nor hearing any thing of him, she began to think he was really gone ; and, under the idea that they had parted in an uncomfortable manner, she was getting very much vexed, and was on the point of seeking Louisa to hear some tidings of him, when he entered the room, equipped for travelling.

“ I came to wish you good morning, Miss Rivers,” said he, with a cold politeness, very different from the easy, plea-

sant kind of intimacy which had lately subsisted between them.

“ So you really are determined to go?”

He bowed an affirmative, and then repeating once more his formal “ good morning,” was hastening away, as if glad to finish a necessary but unpleasant task.

But Eliza, willing to atone for the pain she might have given him, and not enduring to be treated in this ceremonious style, extended her hand to him. “ Do, for Heaven’s sake,” said she, laughing, “ have done with all this bowing, English formality. You put me in mind of poor Corinna’s observation upon the cold-hearted ceremony of our people in addressing one another : ‘ I could not recollect,’ says she, ‘ without emotion, the benignant expressions of my country—*‘cara carissima!’* I would say to myself sometimes, when walking alone (that is here, you know, in this *sombre* England, Mr. Mortimer)

to imitate the amicable way in which you are accosted by the Italians.' ”

“And do you think,” said he, suddenly interrupting her, by taking her hand with an impetuosity that startled her, “do you think that I could not willingly address you in this style, if I dare? From whose lips could those tender words come with such ardent sincerity as mine? Oh *cara carissima!*” he continued, fervently pressing her hand between both his own. But it was the enthusiasm of a moment only; almost immediately surmounting it, he relinquished her hand, and hastily withdrew.

Nothing could exceed the emotion of Eliza, at this abrupt and unexpected declaration of attachment.

It was true she knew that she was beloved; but having just persuaded herself that the passion she had inspired was never intended to be acknowledged, she was ill prepared to receive, without

much agitation, so ardent an avowal of it.

The next thing that occurred to her was, that it certainly never would have been avowed at all, if she had not in a manner extracted it, by what she had herself said. It was in vain that she assured herself, with great truth, over and over again, that she had no idea of drawing such a reply from Mortimer. He could not possibly know the innocence of her thoughts upon the subject ; and it was much more likely he should suppose, that her bringing in a quotation which had nothing to do with the matter was a coquetish contrivance, to elicit from him some acknowledgment of affection, than that he would consider it, as it really was, merely giving words to her ideas.

She tormented herself in this manner half the morning. Nothing could shake from her the distracting thought with which her cruel imagination had fur-

nished her. One thing was clear enough to her, that with whatever sentiments of affection and respect she had hitherto inspired him, they would very soon yield to the contempt that he must feel for her, when, in the calm moment of reflection, he regretted the impulse that had led him to make such an impetuous declaration, and traced it, no doubt, to her coquetry and artifice.

Thus haunted with the phantom of her own creation, she wandered about the garden, not knowing what to do with herself; and at last, listless and miserable, she turned into the summer-house, and taking up a book, she tried to compel herself to attend to it.

But in vain.—She read a few pages, she could not tell what they were about. She looked back to see—then she went on again, with as little success as before. At length, quite wearied, she threw away her book, and with her head leaning on her hands that were clasped upon the

table, she continued in so profound a reverie, that she was not sensible of the presence of any other person, till a deep and tremulous sigh made her start with surprise.

But how was that surprise increased, when, behind her chair, she perceived the object of her thoughts—Mortimer himself, mute and motionless; but with a countenance, every feature of which was agonized with emotion.

Agitated by distress and confusion, she could scarcely pronounce his name, or intelligibly express her surprise at his unexpected appearance.

“Why are you here? why did you return?” she faintly inquired.

“Because I am weak, irresolute, contemptible!” he exclaimed. “But all is over, all is past; my secret is revealed to you; and, doubtless, I am despised! Despised by Miss Rivers! for whose esteem and regard I could be content to lay down my life!”

He turned away, as if intending to leave her, but almost immediately returning, he hastily approached, and taking her hand, he fervently pressed it between both his ; while he looked upon her, for some moments, with an expression of tenderness and dejection, which seemed to implore her not to treat his passion with contempt or unkindness.

Inexpressibly affected, Eliza returned the pressure of his hand. She laboured to speak to him, but doubt and difficulty embarrassed her. She could articulate nothing but "What can I do? what can I say to comfort you?"

"Say that you forgive me, dear Miss Rivers! Say that you will still be what you *have* been to me! Deny me not the charm of your society; your talents; your music—I ask but this—but this, Eliza!"

With a vehemence of intreaty, overwhelming, irresistible, he cast himself at her feet.

"Oh! Mr. Durand," she exclaimed, "I beseech you to rise. All that can be done for your happiness, consistently with mine, I promise you to do. But this subject is so unexpected; give me but time—I can say no more."

"But time! but time!" he repeated; his whole countenance instantaneously changed from an expression of despair to that of hope and expectation: "And do you not cast me from you, Miss Rivers! Do you even pause as to the rejection of a suit so lowly, so unworthy of your talents and deserts? But, beware; in mercy to me, beware of what you do! I can support the certainty of despair: for I shall still be near you! I shall still look upon you! I shall still hear the sound of your voice! But once to have felt the enchanting hope of binding my fate to your's—this to have felt, and this to renounce, I could not bear and live!—my heart would break beneath the effort to forget you!"

Visibly distressed and undetermined, Eliza paused in her reply to this impassioned speech; which Durand observing, in a gentler tone, and in calmer accents, he besought her forgiveness for the uneasiness he occasioned her. "Heaven is my witness," said he, "how fervently my heart is devoted to you; but my happiness shall ever be subservient to your's. Do you desire me to leave you? Do you wish me gone?"

"I do, indeed, most earnestly desire it."

"You shall be obeyed—let me but dwell upon those words of hope, 'give me but time: did you not say so, dearest Eliza?'"

"I did, I repeat it;—now leave me."

He rose, and ardently pressing her hand to his lips, was gone in a moment.

The whole scene in all its circumstances was so abrupt and extraordinary that it wore the appearance of a dream

rather than a reality. It was not till some time had elapsed that Eliza could so compose her excited feelings as to understand what had just passed ; and not till she had been many hours in the solitude and retirement of her own chamber did she attempt to reason or decide upon the conduct she meant to pursue. To accept, or to renounce him, was in either case a matter of infinite debate and doubt, and balanced very equally by good sense—entire approbation of him, his tastes, habits, and pursuits, on one side ; and a slight distaste to fettering herself with an engagement, together with a scarcely defined, but fluttering recollection of Mr. Waldegrave, on the other.

This last consideration, however, she immediately discarded, not caring to acknowledge herself so weak as to be influenced by it in the slightest degree. So uncertain was the chance of their ever meeting again, and so improbable,

even if they did, that circumstances should bring them sufficiently together ; that it looked too much like childishness and folly to dwell, for a moment, on such a contingency.

While she was walking up and down in her apartment in a paroxysm of indecision, some one tapped at the door. It was her maid, who brought her a letter " with Mr. Durand's respects." She opened it, and read as follows :

" I feel that I have given you uneasiness, dear Miss Rivers ; I fear that I have too precipitately trespassed upon your happiness. It is a poor excuse to say that I was surprised by the impulse of the moment into a declaration so abrupt, so inconsistent with the delicacy and respect which is justly due to you. I had not believed myself to be so much the slave of passion ; for I have hitherto been a stranger to that which now absorbs me wholly ; nor was it till very lately, that I discovered how impercep-

tibly my admiration of your beauty and acquirements had glided into an attachment. In the conviction that I had nothing but a devoted heart to offer you, and in the belief of your perfect indifference to me, I laboured to reduce my feelings to the calmness of friendship. It was, as indeed I feared it would be, a vain effort. I am not naturally susceptible of hasty impressions ; but when they are made, they are commonly deep and lasting. Finding it impossible in your presence to maintain the conflict between duty and inclination, I this morning determined to return home for a few days, with the ostensible view of acquainting my mother with the Bishop's kindness, but with the real one of fortifying my resolutions by a temporary absence from you. But, Eliza, how despotic is your influence over me ! I wandered a few miles, in every direction but that which was to

carry me from you. I asked myself repeatedly, why I should thus renounce the happiness of my existence? Without any determined intention of risking my fate by a full acknowledgement of my sentiments for you, I yet thought it possible something might lead me to do so. I felt as if it were impossible for me any longer to support the suspense that made me so wretched. I had already, in parting with you this morning, betrayed myself too far.

“ ‘ I will return to her, at all events,’ I said. Never did my heart feel so light, so elated, as when I retraced my way to the Rectory! ‘ I shall see her again ;’ I repeated—You were the first object I sought on my arrival. I found you in the summer-house—and there, Eliza, before I considered of any thing, I found myself declaring the cherished secret of my heart. Still had I scarcely a hope that you would listen to me. A

crowd of vague emotions overpowered me, and nothing was distinctly present to me but the idea that you would reject, and despise me. But, Eliza, when I saw you hesitate, what a revulsion of feeling took possession of my soul! Is it wonderful that under the impression of hope so new, so unexpected, I gave way to the transports it excited? Oh no, no!—it was natural, it was irresistible—it could not be restrained. But how have I wandered from my purpose! I expected that a few lines would comprize all I had to say, yet—writing to Eliza, how could they be few!

“ I leave you for a short time ; and, in pursuance of my original plan, shall return home for a few days. I leave you, because I would not importune you ; and because I earnestly desire that in a case of this importance your judgment should be perfectly unbiassed. Else, could I spare to dwell upon the rapture

that would fill my heart should your decision be propitious to me ?—But, Eliza, your happiness is dearer, far dearer to me than my own. Think only of that ; and if, upon mature deliberation, there should appear to you a blessed possibility of its being increased by a union with me, it shall be the occupation, as it will be the delight of my life, to prove to you how fervently you are beloved by

“ MORTIMER DURAND.”

The generous nature of his attachment, which this letter strongly portrayed, especially where he spoke of leaving her that she might be unbiassed in her decision by his solicitations, made a powerful impression in his favour on Eliza's mind. But her harassed faculties were exhausted, and really stood in need of repose. As his absence relieved her from a load of embarrassment she determined to dismiss the subject for the remainder of the day.

She was surprized to find no remark made by Louisa or Mr. Henley, upon Mortimer's re-appearance in the morning. It was possible, though not very probable, that they might not have seen or heard of it, but she rather imagined that a remote suspicion of the truth was in the minds of both of them.

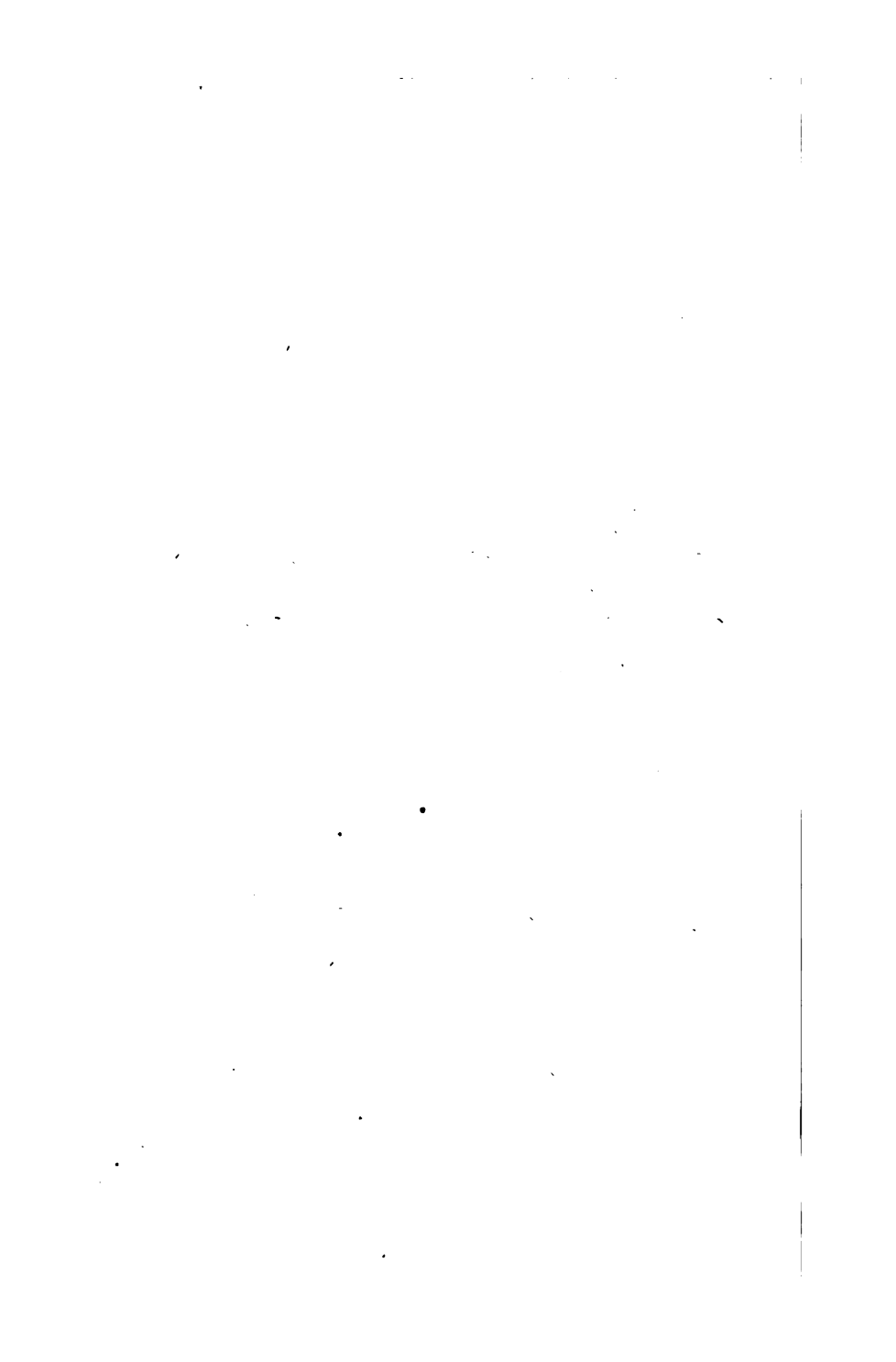
At all events she was very glad to be spared the necessity of speaking of him, till her mind was in a state of greater composure.

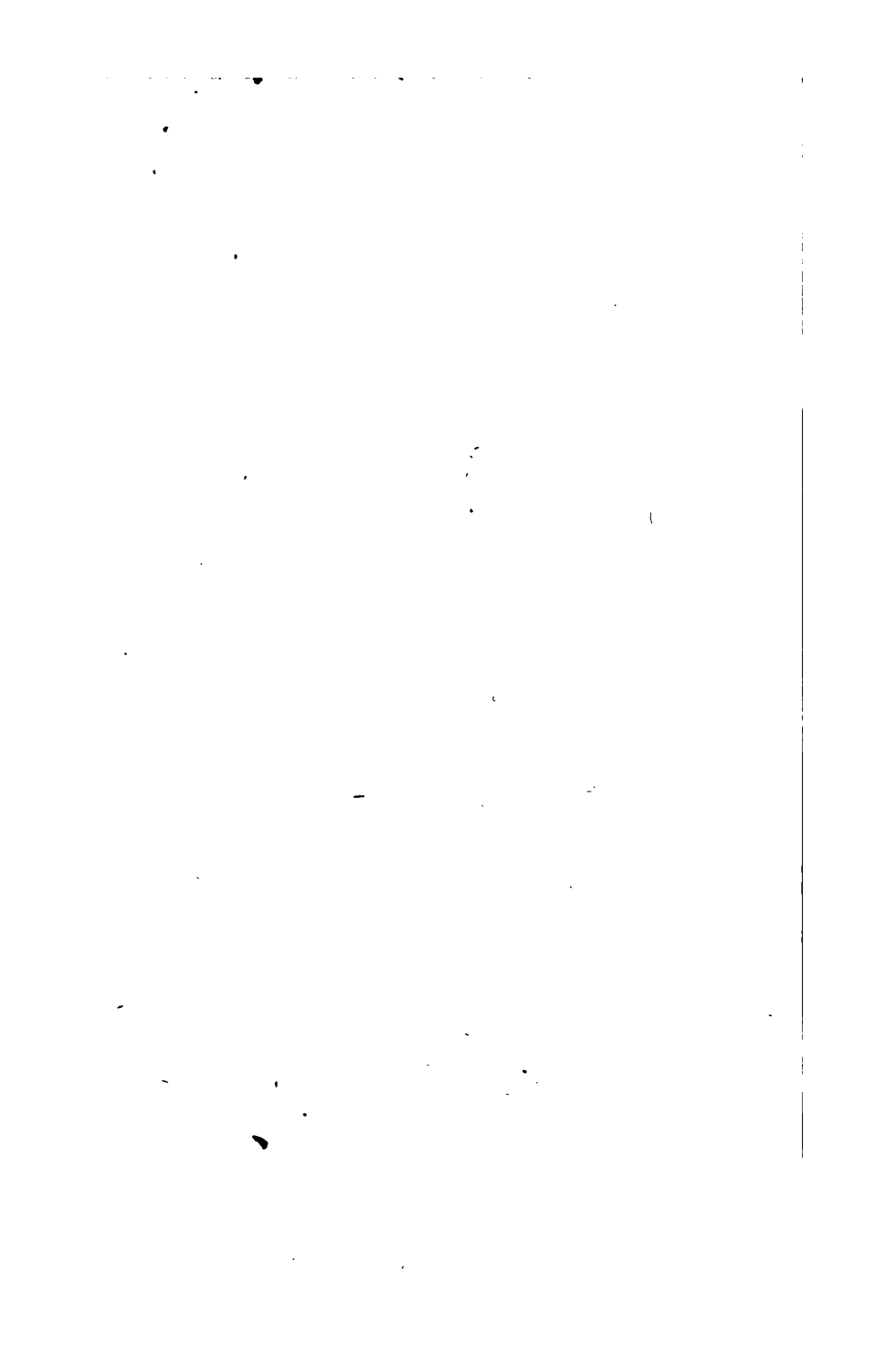
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